

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Mexico: Wrongly imprisoned - one year on**

The Mexican authorities must stop turning a blind eye on the cases of Isidro Baldenegro López and Domingo Rivas Carrillo, said Amnesty International today on the anniversary of their arbitrary detention. The federal authorities can and should take immediate action to halt their unfounded prosecution and ensure their immediate release.

On 29 March 2003 the two environmental defenders were arrested in Chihuahua by the state judicial police on the basis of fabricated evidence in response to their peaceful campaign to stop the unregulated logging of forest lands and protect the local environment.

Following their detention they were forced to pose holding weapons while in the hands of the state judicial police and were not immediately provided with legal assistance before being brought before a federal prosecutor. While the detentions were made by state police, it is the Procurduría General de la República, PGR, Federal Attorney General's Office that is responsible for continuing to seek their conviction.

Amnesty International has adopted them as prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

According to reports, evidence provided in their ongoing trial by the arresting police has been shown to be contradictory and the police officer in charge of the operation that led to their detention has repeatedly failed to appear in court to substantiate his statement raising even further doubts about the police evidence. Despite this, the PGR continue to press charges.

"This case once again demonstrates the lack of accountability of the judicial police, particularly at state level, acting on private interests and leading to the detention of human rights defenders like Isidro Baldenegro and Hermenegildo Rivas," the organization stressed.

"Until these practices are ended, politically motivated charges will remain a feature in the abuse of the judicial system in Mexico," Amnesty International concluded. In this case,

The organization urges the authorities to conduct a full investigation into how the two men came to be detained and charged. Those responsible must be brought to justice and the two men receive adequate reparations for their malicious detention and prosecution.

"In view of previous threats made against Isidro Baldenegro, the authorities should put in place measures to fully guarantee their and their families' safety and the safety of other members of the

community," said Amnesty International.

### **Background Information**

Isidro Baldenegro López, a Tarahumara (or Rarámuri) indigenous leader, and Domingo (Hermenegildo) Rivas Carrillo, from the community of Coloradas de la Virgen in the municipality of Guadalupe y Calvo, Chihuahua State were arrested without warrant by members of the state judicial police on 29 March 2003.

They have been charged with the illegal possession of weapons. Isidro Baldenegro was also charged with possession of marijuana. They are currently in detention in Chihuahua federal prison pending the outcome of their trial. The police stated that the two men were arrested in flagrante delicto.

Both men have denied the charges and described the manner in which they were detained which has been consistently supported by witnesses from the community. The arresting police officers failed on repeated occasions to attend court hearings to substantiate their evidence, delaying the process.

**For further information, please see: "Prisoners of conscience: indigenous environmental activists, Isidro Baldenegro López and Hermenegildo Rivas Carrillo"**  
**<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAMR410512003>**

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