

# URGENT ACTION

## EYEWITNESSES TO KILLING OF DEFENDERS HARASSED

**Key eyewitnesses into the killings of two human rights defenders have been harassed in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. This is an apparent attempt to stop them from giving testimony in court. Their lives could be at risk.**

On 22 January relatives of a man who has been arrested in connection with the killing of human rights defenders Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola intimidated two Indigenous women who witnessed the events. Both witnesses are soon due to give oral testimonies in court. The relatives confronted the two women (whose names are withheld for security reasons) in the town of El Carrizal, Oaxaca state, southern Mexico, where the women live, and told them to retract their previous written testimonies.

Both witnesses have since left El Carrizal. On 3 and 4 February the same people turned up at their home and told their relative that "something bad can happen" (*algo malo puede pasar*) if the women do not retract their testimonies. State authorities have provided insufficient security measures for the women to date.

In 2012 arrest warrants were issued against an armed gang with apparent links to municipal and state authorities in connection with the killing of both Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola in 2010 near the Indigenous town of San Juan Copala, Oaxaca state. Eleven of those accused remain at large, as state and federal authorities have consistently failed to carry out the arrest warrants, apparently due to fear of retaliation from the gang.

### Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the federal and state authorities to provide effective and comprehensive protection for these and all witnesses into the case, in strict accordance with the wishes of those affected, and in full compliance with local legislation on witness protection;
- Calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the harassment of eyewitnesses, and for those responsible to be brought to account;
- Calling for a full investigation into the killing of Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola, as well as the killing of many other people from the San Juan Copala in the last few years, including the apparent links between armed gangs and municipal and state authorities, and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 MARCH 2015 TO:

#### Governor of Oaxaca State

Lic. Gabino Cué Monteagudo  
 Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca  
 Plaza de la Constitución, Centro  
 Histórico, Oaxaca de Juárez,  
 Oaxaca, C.P. 68000, México  
 Fax: +52 95 1501 8100, ext. 40068  
 Email: spagoboaxaca@gmail.com

**Salutation: Dear Governor / Estimado  
 Gobernador**

#### Minister of the Interior

Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong  
 Secretario de Gobernación  
 Secretaría de Gobernación  
 Bucareli 99, col. Juárez, Cuauhtémoc,  
 Distrito Federal, C.P. 6600, México  
 Fax: +52 55 5093 3414  
 Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx

**Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado  
 Secretario**

#### **And copies to:**

#### Local human rights organization

Movimiento Agrario Indígena Zapatista  
 (MAIZ)  
 Campillo #45, esquina con 21 de marzo,  
 Colonia Alta Vista de Juárez,  
 Huajuapán de León,  
 Oaxaca, C.P. 69005, México  
 Email: maizmixtec@yahoo.com.mx

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
 INTERNATIONAL**



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## EYEWITNESSES TO KILLING OF DEFENDERS HARASSED

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 27 April 2010, men belonging to an armed group reportedly linked to state and municipal authorities shot dead Mexican human rights defender Bety Cariño Trujillo and Finnish human rights observer Jyri Antero Jaakkola in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. Both activists were part of a humanitarian convoy that was trying to reach the remote Triqui Indigenous community of San Juan Copala, which had been under siege by the armed group for several months, in order to deliver food and medicine and to document the human rights situation. All the other members of the convoy, around 25 people, survived the attack but some of them suffered gun shot wounds and were detained and questioned by the assailants for around one hour before being released. Some members of the convoy fled the region on foot while others were forced to hide from the armed group before being rescued.

Between November 2009 and September 2010, San Juan Copala was besieged by armed men belonging to a local Indigenous organization, Social Welfare Union for the Triqui Region (Unión para el Bienestar Social de la Región Triqui, UBISORT) which is allied to the then ruling party in the state, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI). Several local residents were killed or wounded in this period but the armed groups continued to operate with impunity. The state authorities failed to take action to prevent and punish abuses, leaving the population of San Juan Copala vulnerable to attack and without access to basic services for several months.

Bety Cariño was head of the “Working Together” Community Support Centre (Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unidos, CACTUS) in the city of Huajuapán de León, Oaxaca state. She ran workshops to promote women’s rights in the local Indigenous communities and had supported many of these women in their effort to set up community radio stations. Bety Cariño had also campaigned for truth and justice in the killing of two community radio broadcasters, Felicitas Martínez and Teresa Bautista, in San Juan Copala, in 2008.

Jyri Jaakkola was a member of the Finnish organization Uusi Tuuli (New Wind) and had campaigned on climate change, fair trade and food security in Finland and beyond. He was carrying out research on sustainable agriculture and Indigenous customs in the state of Oaxaca. He used to blog about his findings and his experiences from the field.

In September 2012 a local judge issued arrest warrants for 14 people who are believed to be involved in the killing of Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola. Two of the suspects have subsequently been arrested and one has died. Eleven people remain at large. Federal and state authorities have repeatedly promised effective protection measures to the witnesses and survivors of the attack, but so far implementation has been limited and inadequate.

Armed groups have operated with impunity in the Triqui Indigenous area of Oaxaca state for many years taking advantage of community divisions and striving to impose political control. The Triqui region is one of the poorest in Mexico, which has resulted in mass migration of many sections of the population and local political conflicts. Successive state governments have failed to address the deprivations of much of the local population and local human rights organizations accused the 2004-2010 state government of exploiting community divisions and allowing armed groups to operate with impunity. State and municipal officials are believed to have financed, tolerated or even supported some of these groups. The rule of law is largely absent in the region and virtually no one has been brought to justice for any of the crimes committed, leaving much of the population vulnerable to attack and subject to the control of armed groups. The current state government, which took office in December 2010, has promised to address the problems affecting the Triqui region, but little change can be seen.

Name: Two eyewitnesses to the killings of Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola (names withheld)

Gender m/f: f

UA: 30/15 Index: AMR 41/005/2015 Issue Date: 10 February 2015