

UA 9/02

Fear for**MEXICO** Elifonso Martínez Torres (m), municipal representative of El Zapotillal

Juan Bautista Valle (m)

Hector Carrillo (m)

**Other members of the *Organización de Campesinos Ecologistas de la Sierra de Petetlán y Coyuca de Catalán***

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The Mexican army has maintained a presence in the communities of El Zapotillal and Canelejas, in the municipality of Petetlán, Guerrero State, since 26 December 2001, reportedly intimidating and harassing local people. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of people in the communities.

The OCESP, an environmental group that campaigns against logging operations that threaten the forests of Guerrero with activists and sympathizers in the area, particularly El Zapotillal. Members of the *Organización de Campesinos Ecologistas de la Sierra de Petetlán y Coyuca de Catalán* (OCESP), Peasant Environmentalist Organization of the Mountains of Petetlán and Coyuca de Catalán have claimed that soldiers operate in collusion with local political bosses (*caciques*) to fabricate charges against them. Over recent years several OCESP members have been detained by the military and charged with drugs and firearms offences.

The army is responsible for counter insurgency and counter narcotics operations in Guerrero. The presence of the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion in Canalejas and El Zapotillal was reportedly part of these duties. However, people in the communities have reported that soldiers have threatened and intimidated them, positioning soldiers outside the house of municipal representative (comisario municipal) Elifonso Martínez Torres, firing shots into the air and asking about the whereabouts of OCESP members.

OCESP members Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera were arbitrarily detained by the army in 1999, in Petetlan municipality, and tortured to force them to confess to drug and firearm offences. They were later tried and convicted on the basis of these confessions. In November 2001 President Fox ordered their release, after international and national pressure highlighted the injustice the men had suffered.

Leading human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa, who had represented Montiel and Cabrera, was murdered in her office in Mexico city in October 2001. No one has yet been brought to justice for her murder. In November 2001 many OCESP members and residents of El Zapotillal and other nearby communities went to Mexico City to demand justice for the murdered lawyer and petition the authorities to extend their investigation into the murder to Guerrero. On their return to Guerrero a leading OCESP member reportedly received death threats.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Political violence is endemic in Guerrero. There is a heavy military presence in many parts of the state, ostensibly to combat armed opposition groups and drug trafficking. This, together with the presence of armed opposition groups, has contributed to the grave human rights situation in the state. Over the years there have been persistent reports of the military being responsible for human rights violations.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of people living in the communities of Canalejas and El Zapotillal, Guerrero state, in particular municipal representative Elifonso Martínez Torres and members of the *Organización de Campesinos Ecologistas de la Sierra de Petetlán y Coyuca de Catalán* (OCESP), including Juan Bautista Valle and Hector Carrillo, and asking the authorities to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full, impartial and independent investigation into reports that soldiers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion have threatened and harassed these communities, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities of their obligation to ensure that the military carry out their work, including policing operations, in line with international standards to protect human rights.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Lic. Vicente Fox Quesada  
Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos  
Residencia Oficial de "Los Pinos"  
Col. San Miguel Chapultepec  
México D.F., C.P. 11850  
MEXICO

**Telegrams: President, Mexico D.F., Mexico**

**Fax: (+525 55) 516 9537**

**Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear Mr President**

Attorney General of the Republic

General Rafael Marcial Macedo de la Concha  
Procurador General de la Republica  
Procuraduría General de la República  
Reforma Norte esq. Violeta 75  
Col. Guerrero  
Delegación Cuauhtémoc  
México D.F., C.P. 06300  
MEXICO

**Telegrams: Attorney General of the Republic, Mexico D.F., Mexico**

**Fax: (+525 55) 346 0983 / 626 4419 / 346 0906**

**Salutation: Señor Procurador General / Dear Attorney General**

Minister of National Defence

Gral. Gerardo Clemente Ricardo Vega García  
Secretario de la Defensa Nacional  
Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional  
Bulevar M. Ávila Camacho esq. Industria Militar S/N  
Col. Lomas de Sotelo  
Delegación Miguel Hidalgo  
México D.F., C.P. 11640  
MEXICO

**Telegrams: Secretario de la Defensa Nacional, Mexico D.F., Mexico**

**Fax: (+525 55) 557 8963**

**Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Minister**

Governor of Guerrero

Lic. René Juárez Cisneros  
Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero

Palacio de Gobierno, segundo piso  
Plaza Central, Primer Congreso de Anahuac  
Colonia Centro  
Chilpancingo 39000  
Guerrero  
MEXICO

**Telegrams: Gobernador, Guerrero, Mexico**

**Fax: (+52 747) 2 3125**

**Salutation: Señor Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Colectivo Costa Libre  
Paseo del Pescador No.9  
Zihuantanejo Centro  
C.P. 40880  
Guerrero  
Mexico

diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 February 2002.