

PUBLIC

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UA 07/08 Fear for safety/ Disappearance

MEXICO Lauro Juárez (m), Chatino indigenous community leader

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Lauro Juárez, a recently elected Chatino indigenous community leader from the municipality of Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, Oaxaca State, has been missing from the site of a roadside protest since 30 December.

On 26 December 2007, approximately 1200 people, including Lauro Juárez, other community leaders and inhabitants of the municipalities of Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, San Gabriel Mixtepec and Santos Reyes Nopala, started a demonstration along the road connecting Oaxaca City and Puerto Escondido. They were protesting against the State Electoral Institute's (*Instituto Estatal Electoral*) failure to endorse the municipal representatives that had been regularly selected in Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec according to the traditional indigenous system (*usos y costumbres*), a system in place in the majority of Oaxaca state indigenous municipalities. The protesters also denounced a series of violent incidents and threats that took place in the electoral meetings in the nearby communities of San Gabriel Mixtepec and Santos Reyes Nopala.

On 29 December, reportedly fearing retaliation from local police and groups of armed men, the protesters called off the demonstration and started to return home. Lauro Juárez, who had stayed behind when most of the protesters had already left, was last seen early on 30 December, sleeping in a house adjacent to the site of the protest. His suitcase was found at the site, but he and his blanket have disappeared. His disappearance has been reported to the Office of the Oaxaca State Attorney General and the Interamerican Commission for Human Rights.

Later on 30 December, a group of approximately 70 men armed with machetes and guns blocked the access road to Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, beating and intimidating passers-by and impeding the return home of the protesters.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In Mexico, community leaders who try to strengthen local indigenous rights have frequently been targets of threats, harassment, and spurious criminal charges, particularly by state and municipal authorities. Those responsible are rarely identified or brought to justice. Many indigenous communities in Mexico live in extreme poverty with high levels of violence. The authorities in states with sizeable indigenous populations, especially southern states such as Oaxaca, frequently fail to provide adequate resources to effectively address the problems that have led to the marginalization of these communities, such as ensuring access to health care, education, public transport and land.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Lauro Juárez, who has been missing from the site of a roadside protest since 30 December 2007;
- urging the authorities to promptly conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the fate and whereabouts of Lauro Juárez;
- calling for the state authorities to conduct an independent and impartial investigation into all reports of violence during the local elections in the municipalities of Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, San Gabriel Mixtepec and Santos Reyes Nopala;
- calling on the authorities to ensure the safety of protesters and other recently elected local leaders, who may be at risk of attack by illegal armed groups.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Interior

Francisco Javier Ramirez Acuña  
Secretario de Gobernación, Secretaría de Gobernación  
Bucareli No. 99, Edificio Cobián, 1er piso, Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc, México D.F. 06600, MEXICO

**Fax:** +52 55 5093 3414

**Email:** [secretario@segob.gob.mx](mailto:secretario@segob.gob.mx)

**Salutation:** Señor Secretario / Dear Minister

Governor of Oaxaca

Lic. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz

Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca

Carretera Oaxaca-Puerto Ángel, Km. 9.5, Santa María Coyotepec, Oaxaca C.P. 71254, Oaxaca, MEXICO

**Fax:** +52 951 502 0530 (if a voice answers, ask "me da tono de fax, por favor")

**E-mail:** [gobernador@oaxaca.gob.mx](mailto:gobernador@oaxaca.gob.mx)

**Salutation:** Señor Gobernador / Dear Governor

State Attorney General of Oaxaca

Lic. Evencio Nicolás Martínez Ramírez

Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Oaxaca, Avenida Luis Echeverría s/n, Col. La Experimental,  
San Antonio de la Cal, Oaxaca C.P. 71236, Oaxaca, MEXICO

**Fax:** +52 951 511 5519

**Salutation:** Dear Prosecutor / Estimado Procurador

**COPIES TO:**

Oaxaca State Human Rights Commission

Dr. Heriberto Antonio García

Presidente de la Comisión para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Oaxaca (CDDHO)

Calle de los Derechos Humanos no. 210, Col. América, C.P. 68050, Oaxaca, MEXICO

**E-mail:** [correo@cedhoax.org](mailto:correo@cedhoax.org)

**Fax:** +52 951 503 0220 (if a voice answers, ask "me da tono de fax, por favor")

**Salutation:** Dear President / Estimado Presidente

Local Human Rights Organisation

Centro de Derechos Humanos y Asesoría a Pueblos Indígenas

Calle León, no. 15 Barrio San Diego, Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, México

Email: [cedhapi@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:cedhapi@yahoo.com.mx)

and to 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 19 February 2008.