

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety / Death threats

9 March 2000

MEXICO

**Members of the communities of Nicolás Ruiz and Nuevo Poblado de Nachejev,
Chiapas state**

Amnesty International is very concerned that two recent attacks by “paramilitary” or “armed civilian” groups on the communities in Chiapas State named above were reportedly carried out with the support of the security forces. The organization is concerned for the safety of people living in the communities as they may face reprisals for denouncing the involvement of the security forces.

On 1 March 2000, a dispute over land rights in the municipality of Nicolás Ruiz, turned violent when members of the Public Security Police, *Policía de Seguridad Pública*, reportedly aided an armed group, “Alianza Campesina” - affiliated to the governing party(1) - attack community members affiliated to the opposition party(2). At least three people received gunshot wounds and a fourth was beaten.

The security forces continue to maintain a heavy presence in the main town of the municipality, Nicolás Ruiz.

In a separate incident on the same day, armed members of a “paramilitary” or “armed civilian” group known as “*chinchulines*” entered the community of Nuevo Poblado de Nachejev in the Municipality of Chilón, accompanied by 12 Federal Judicial Police, *Policía Judicial Federal*, and reportedly attacked people in their homes, including two pregnant women. The community was told that if they did not leave the area the armed men would come back to kill them. Two people abducted were released a short time later. The Federal Judicial Police not only apparently acted in collaboration with the armed group, but also did not possess any legal eviction order.

(1) The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*,

(2) The Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over a number of years Amnesty International has documented a pattern of human rights violations against peasant and indigenous communities by the security forces as well as “paramilitary” or “armed civilian” groups in the state of Chiapas. Many cases have occurred in the context of counter-insurgency operations in which the authorities have attempted to link activists to the armed opposition group, the *Ejército Zapatista de la Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), Zapatista Army of National Liberation, based in Chiapas state.

In 1998 there were a spate of military operations against supposed EZLN members in the communities of Taniperla, Diez de Abril, Amparo Aguatinta, Nicolás Ruiz, and El Bosque, all in the state of Chiapas. This culminated in the arrest of 167 people in Nicolás Ruiz - most of whom were released without charge - in an operation which involved hundreds of police and soldiers in June 1998.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- calling for the authorities to guarantee the safety of members of the communities of Nicolás Ruiz and Nuevo Poblado de Nachejev in the municipalities of Nicolás Ruiz and Chilón in Chiapas state, in the light of recent attacks and threats made on community members;
- expressing concern at reports that members of the security forces acted in collaboration with “paramilitary” and “armed civilian” groups when carrying out these operations;

- urging a prompt, full and impartial investigation into the continuing activities of “paramilitary” or “armed civilian” groups in Chiapas and calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to dismantle them.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Roberto Albores Guillén
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas
Palacio de Gobierno, Piso 1
Col. Centro, 29000 Tuxtla Gutiérrez
Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Chiapas, México

Faxes: +52 961 2 0917

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Attorney of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Eduardo Montoya Liévano
Procurador del Estado de Chiapas
Procuraduría General del Estado de Chiapas
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador del Estado, Chiapas, México

Faxes: +52 961 65724

Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Attorney General

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuellar
Señor Procurador General de Justicia de la República
Procuraduría General de Justicia de la República
Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta, Col. Guerrero
06300 México D.F., MEXICO

Telegrams: Procuraduría General de la República, México DF, México

Faxes: +52 5 346 0906

Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Attorney General

President of State Human Rights Commission

Lic. Cuauhtemoc Lopez Sanchez
Presidente de la Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos de Chiapas
Libramiento Sur Poniente N° 212
29060, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico

Telegrams: Presidente de la CEDH, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, México DF, México

Faxes: +52 961 25506 (Say: “Me da tono de fax, por favor)

Email: Cedhchiapas@infosel.net.mx

Salutation: Estimado Sr. / Dear Sir

COPIES TO: Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

Centro de Derechos Humanos “Fray Bartolomé de las Casas”,

Calle Cuauhtémoc No. 12, Centro Historico, C.P. 29200.

San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México

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 20 April 2000.