

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/14/97

UA 84/97

"Disappearance"/fear of torture/possible
prisoner of conscience

25 March 1997

MEXICO Ignacio Fernando Niño García, human rights defender, teacher

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Prof. Ignacio Fernando Niño García. He has not been seen since his reported arrest during a peaceful demonstration he was taking part in was violently broken up on Friday 21 March 1997.

Approximately 50 local human rights activists were participating in a peaceful protest in the town of San Agustín Loxicha, in the Loxicha region of the state of Guerrero. The demonstrators were demanding the release of the Loxicha indigenous people arbitrarily detained and imprisoned since the second half of last year charged with membership of the *Ejército Revolucionario Popular* (ERP), People's Revolutionary Army, an armed opposition group.

According to reports, 80 men, including members of the state police, many with their faces covered and armed with sticks, machetes and rifles, attacked the demonstrators in the local school which they (the demonstrators) had occupied. Some of the protestors, among them Juliana González Roque, Alejandro Sandoval Samperio, Gerardo Pulido Sandoval and Bertha Ramírez Ramírez were seriously injured in the attack.

Ignacio Fernando Niño García, a human rights activist and teacher, was reportedly arbitrarily arrested during the attack. Amnesty International is gravely concerned for his safety and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

According to reports, members of the Mexican army were present in the town at the time of the incident. Some apparently participated in the attack on the demonstrators. They also prevented the protestors from entering the town hall to ask for protection.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A wave of violence has swept through Guerrero state since the massacre of 17 peasants on 28 June 1995 in the village of Aguas Blancas in an ambush staged by the state police and government officials (see UA 159/95, AMR 41/15/95, 5 July 1995, and follow-ups AMR 41/16/95, 26 July 1995, and AMR 41/18/95, 17 August 1995).

The EPR first became known on 28 June 1996, the anniversary of the Aguas Blancas massacre. Since then the security forces have consistently targeted peasants and their leaders as well as community activists and human rights defenders for intimidation, arrest, ill-treatment and torture in the context of counter-insurgency operations.

Between September and November 1996 approximately 60 peasants and teachers of the Loxicha region of the state of Guerrero were arbitrarily arrested and detained on suspicion of belonging to the EPR. Many of those arrested suffered torture. Their families and human rights activists have continuously campaigned for the release of the detained and have themselves been targets for intimidation. A climate of systematic human rights abuses and impunity prevails in the region.

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

- urging that the whereabouts of Ignacio Fernando Niño García be immediately established and that his family be informed;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release unless he is to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- seeking assurances that he will not be subjected to any form of ill-treatment or torture;
- urging a prompt and full investigation into the attack on the demonstrators in San Agustín Loxicha on 21 March 1997 and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing deep alarm at the continuing human rights violations in Guerrero, and the apparent lack of effective action on the part of the authorities to stop them and to end the impunity currently enjoyed by most perpetrators.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Interior

Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor
Secretario de Gobernación
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucarelli 99, 1er piso,
Col Juarez, 06699 México DF, MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario de Gobernación, México DF, México

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350

Salutation: Sr. Secretario / Dear Minister

2) Attorney General of the State of Guerrero

Lic. Antonio Hernández Díaz
Procurador del Estado de Guerrero
Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6.300
CP 39.000, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO.

Telegrams: Sr. Procurador, Guerrero, México

Faxes: + 52 747 223 28 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Procurador/ Dear Attorney

3) Interim Governor of the State of Guerrero

Ángel Heladio Aguirre Rivero
Gobernador Interino del Estado de Guerrero
Palacio de Gobierno
Plaza Primer Congreso de Anahuac
39000 Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador Aguirre, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, México

Faxes: + 52 747 23072 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

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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 6 May 1997.