

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety / Threats

16 May 2002

MEXICO

**Joaquín Flores Félix (m) indigenous rights defender
And his family**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Joaquín Flores Félix and his family. He is an academic on indigenous issues and a founder member of a leading human rights organization in the State of Guerrero and has reportedly been receiving threatening phone calls at his home in Mexico City.

On 27 March, Joaquín Flores reportedly received a phone call from an unidentified individual who threatened to hurt his daughter and ex-wife. On 2 May, his ex-wife's flat caught fire under suspicious circumstances. The next day, another phone call was made to Joaquín Flores' home in which the caller insulted him before hanging up. Within a few minutes yet another call was made, in which the caller pretended to be from a Mexican bank inquiring about an outstanding debt. Joaquín Flores told the caller that he did not have an account with that bank, at which point another person took the phone, and insulted him adding "take care of yourself because we are following you", "*cuídate porque te estamos rastreando*". On 4 May, insults were left on Joaquín Flores' answer machine as well as a threat which said, "there's not long to go now, because now we are close", "*ya falta poco, porque ahora sí ya estamos cerca*".

On 6 May, Joaquín Flores went to the Attorney General's Office of the Federal District, *Procuraduría General del Distrito Federal*, to report the threats. On 15 May, he reportedly received another message on his answer machine that included the same insults as before, as well as the threat "we'll soon meet each other", "*pronto nos encontraremos*."

Joaquín Flores is a founder of the human rights organization, *Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan A.C.*, Human Rights Centre of Montaña Tlachinollan A.C., in the state of Guerrero. He is a lecturer at the Metropolitan Autonomous University in the Federal District and is closely identified with work on indigenous issues in Guerrero.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The indigenous rights movement plays a key role in strengthening the rule of law and the development of institutions to protect the rights of indigenous communities. However, those involved in protecting indigenous rights in Mexico have often been the target of threats and harassment themselves. Their personal safety is often put in danger and those responsible are usually never brought to justice. Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the recent increase in attacks against human rights defenders and fears that this represents a deliberate attempt to stop them from carrying out their legitimate work.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Joaquín Flores Félix and his family following several threatening phone calls to their home;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Joaquín Flores and his family, in accordance with his wishes;

- urging the authorities to carry out a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation in response to the formal complaint lodged by Joaquín Flores, to make the results public, and to bring those responsible to justice;

APPEALS TO:

Head of Government of the Federal District of Mexico
Lic. Andrés Manuel López Obrador
Jefe de Gobierno del Distrito Federal
Plaza de la Constitución esq. Pino Suárez
Piso 1, Col. Centro 06068(5)

México D.F. ,MEXICO

Telegrams: Jefe Gobierno del Distrito Federal, México DF, México

Faxes: + 525 55 521 0028

Salutation: Señor Jefe de Gobierno / Dear Head of Government

Attorney General of the Federal District

Mtro. Bernardo Bátiz Vázquez

Procurador General del Distrito Federal

Gabriel Hernández #56, 5° piso,

col. Doctores,

México D.F. 06720

MÉXICO

Telegrams: Procurador General del Distrito Federal, México DF, México

Faxes: + 525 55 345 5529

Salutation: Señor Procurador General /Dear Attorney General

Human Rights Commission of the Federal District

Emilio Alvarez Icaza

Presidente de la Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos del D.F.

Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos del D.F.

Av. Chapultepec no. 49, esq. Emilio Alvarez Icaza, primer piso

Colonia Centro, Delegacion Cuauhtemoc

México D.F. 06040

MÉXICO

Telegrams: Presidente de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos, Distrito Federal, Mexico

Faxes: + 525 55 578 2578

Salutation: Señor Presidente/ Dear President

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Centre of Montaña Tlachinollan A.C.

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan, A.C

Calle Mina No.26

Colonia Centro

CP 41304 Tlapa, Guerrero

MEXICO

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 27 June 2002.