

MEXICO Juan Anzaldo Meneses (m) - indigenous rights defender

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Juan Anzaldo Meneses, member of the indigenous rights group *Ce-Acatl*. He was reportedly stopped by State Judicial Police, *Policia Judicial del Estado* (PJE) in Mexico State on 12 June and taken to an unidentified location where he was threatened and interrogated about his work, before being released.

Juan Anzaldo Meneses was on his way back from a peaceful demonstration outside the National Supreme Justice Court, which the *Ce-Acatl* had helped organise, when he was allegedly stopped by men driving a pick-up truck. Juan Anzaldo Meneses asked whether they were state or municipal police officers to which they allegedly replied, "...the State, which other would we be from?", ("Del Estado, del cual ibamos a ser?"). They asked him to produce identification and searched his car. He was then forced into his own car and driven to an unknown location, meanwhile one of the men held him in a head lock and covered his eyes.

During the short journey, the man driving reportedly stated that he was not a police officer. He also reportedly asked Juan Anzaldo about his work, his family, where he lived and where he had just been. When the car stopped, it was searched again, before Juan Anzaldo was released. He was told to drive straight ahead, otherwise he would be shot. They also threatened to find him if he told anybody what had happened to him. His money and debit card were stolen.

Juan Anzaldo reported the incident to the Public Ministry, *Ministerio Público* in La Paz the following day. The *Ce-Acatl* had reported attacks on their vehicles on three separate occasions in the past. In all these instances, the vehicles were not stolen and only the organisations documents and books were taken.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Juan Anzaldo and the *Ce-Acatl* have played a very important role in the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) over the years and have recently taken an active role in the protests against the contentious Indigenous Law Reform approved by Congress earlier this year. Juan Anzaldo Meneses along with other prominent indigenous rights organisations have lodged an appeal with the National Supreme Justice Court against the contentious new Indigenous Law Reform questioning its legitimacy and calling for it to be declared unconstitutional.

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.

Human rights defenders are also frequently harassed and suffer reprisals as a consequence of their work. Digna Ochoa, a prominent human rights lawyer was shot dead in her office in October 2001. The authorities as yet have not brought anybody to justice for the killing.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Juan Anzaldo Meneses;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Juan Anzaldo Meneses, 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 Juan Anzaldo Meneses, to make the results public, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Santiago Creel
Secretario de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez
Delegación Cuauhtémoc
México D.F., C.P.06600

MEXICO

Telegrams:Secretario de Gobernacion, Mexico D.F., Mexico

Fax: + 525 55 093 3414 / 093 3415

Salutation:Señor Secretario / Dear Minister

Governor of Mexico State

Lic. Arturo Montiel Rojas
Gobernador del Estado de México
Palacio de Gobierno, 1er Piso
Lerso No. 300 Poniente, Col. Centro
Toluca 50000
Estado de México

MEXICO

Telegrams:Gobernador del Estado de Mexico, Estado de Mexico, Mexico

Fax: + 52 722 2 14 4172

Salutation:Dear Governor/Señor Gobernador

Attorney General of Mexico State

Jorge Reyes Santana
Procurador del Estado de México
Morelos 1300, Piso 6
Col. San Sebastián
Toluca 50090
Estado de México

MÉXICO

Telegrams:Procurador General del Estado de Mexico, Estado de Mexico, Mexico

Fax: + 52 722 2 14 9371 (if someone answers say "me da tono")

Salutation:Dear Attorney/Señor Procurador

Human Rights Commission of Mexico State

Comisionado de los Derechos
Humanos del Estado de México (Codhem)
Instituto Literario No. 510 Esq. Villada
Col. Centro
50000, Toluca, México

MÉXICO

Telegram: Presidente de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos, Estado de Mexico, Mexico

Fax: + 52 722 214 0880

Salutation: Dear President/ Señor Presidente

COPIES TO:

Indigenous Rights Organization

Ce-Acatl, A.C.

Ingenio de Zacatepec 134,

Col. Rinconada Coapa

Mexico D.F. 14330

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 1 August 2002.