

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/54/97

UA 202/97

Fear for safety

8 July 1997

MEXICO Father Javier Avila, Catholic priest, human rights activist

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Father Javier Avila who received an anonymous death threat on 6 July 1997. The threat, which informed him he would be killed the following day, was left on Father Javier Avila's telephone answer-machine. Amnesty International is calling on the authorities to take steps to guarantee his physical security.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Father Javier Avila is a Jesuit priest and founder of the *Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, (COSYDDAHAC) Commission for Solidarity and the Defence of Human Rights, a non governmental human rights organization in the state of Chihuahua.

COSYDDHAC has been active in the defence of human rights in Chihuahua for many years, often coming into conflict with local authorities because of its criticisms of abuses allegedly committed by the state security forces. Father Javier Avila is particularly well-known for the work he carries out in defence of the rights of the Tarahumara indigenous community in the state of Chihuahua.

Members of COSYDDHAC, including Father Javier Avila, have frequently received death threats for their human rights work, documented in UA 122/96, AMR 41/22/96, 9 May 1996 and follow-ups: AMR 41/63/96, 11 October 1996, AMR 41/04/97 31 January 1997).

Members of the Catholic Church and other grassroots organizations have been active in promoting and protecting the rights of the indigenous population in Mexico for many decades. They have frequently encountered opposition from the local authorities and large landowners. Church and human rights activists monitoring the human rights situation in states with large indigenous minorities or peasants have faced a series of threats and attacks. The impunity that those responsible enjoy is central to the worsening human rights situation in Mexico and is documented in the Amnesty International document: *Central America and Mexico: Human Rights Defenders on the Front Line* (AMR 02/01/96).

#### **FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:**

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Father Javier Avila;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee the physical security of Father Javier Avila;
- expressing extreme disquiet that no one has been brought to justice for earlier threats made against members of COSYDDHAC;
- calling for the prompt, thorough and full investigation into those earlier threats and the renewed campaign of intimidation against Father Javier Avila and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

#### APPEALS TO

1) Minister of the Interior  
Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor  
Secretario de la Gobernación  
Secretaría de la Gobernación  
Bucareli 99, 1er piso

Col. Juárez, 06699 México DF, MÉXICO  
**Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México D.F., México**  
**Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350/+ 52 5 535 9952**  
**Salutation: Sr. Secretario/Dear Minister**

2) Attorney General of the Republic  
Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar  
Procurador General de la República  
Procuraduría General de la República  
Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta  
Col. Guerrero, 06300 México D.F., MEXICO  
**Telegrams: Procurador Madrazo, México D.F., México**  
**Faxes: +52 5 626 4419**  
**Salutation: Sr. Procurador General / Dear Attorney General**

3) Governor of the State of Chihuahua  
Lic. C. Francisco Barrio Terrazas  
Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua  
Palacio de Gobierno  
Ciudad Juárez  
Estado de Chihuahua, MEXICO  
**Telegrams: Gobernador, Barrio Terrazas, Chihuahua, México**  
**Fax: +52 14 29 34 64**  
**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Human rights organization  
Sres. Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos AC.  
Calle 24 esq. con Terrazas #3007  
Col. Pacifico CP. 31030  
Chihuahua, MEXICO  
**e-mail: cosyddhac@infosel.net.mx**  
**Faxes: +52 1415 0486 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")**

Daily newspaper  
Sr. Editor  
*La Jornada*  
Balderas 68  
06050 México D.F., 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 19 August 1997.