

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/111/97

UA 373/97

Fear for safety

27 November 1997

**MEXICO Members of opposition political parties and their families, in the  
municipality of Chenalhó, Chiapas State**

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of members of the Partido de la Revolucion Democrática (PRD), Party of the Democratic Revolution, an opposition party, in the municipality of Chenalhó, Chiapas State, following a series of recent attacks carried out by a paramilitary group that has left at least six people dead and forced more than 100 families to seek refuge in the mountains surrounding the area.

At 8am on 18 November 1997, about 30 men, reported to be members of *Máscara Roja*, Red Mask, a paramilitary group operating in the area, entered the community of Aurora Chica, Chenalhó, and opened fire on a number of houses. As a result, Agustín Hernández López, Rosa Pérez López (f), Mario Hernández Pérez, Mariano Santis Gómez, Pedro Pérez Hernández and Elena Hernández Pérez (f), were all killed. All six were members of the PRD.

On 20 November, according to reports, members of *Máscara Roja* set fire to at least 50 houses in various communities of the municipality. As a result, more than 100 families have fled the area in fear of their lives.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the worsening human rights situation in the state of Chiapas as a result of growing harassment, threats and attacks directed against peasant communities by paramilitary groups, in particular *Paz y Justicia*, Peace and Justice, and *Máscara Roja*, acting on behalf of local chiefs linked to the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), Institutional Revolutionary Party, the ruling party. Alarming, such activities are carried out with the acquiescence and tacit support of the authorities, whereby most of those responsible remain unpunished. On 4 November 1997, Samuel Ruiz, bishop of the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas State, well-respected for his efforts to bring peace to the area, escaped unhurt after the convoy in which he and other members of the clergy were travelling was ambushed, reportedly by members of *Paz y Justicia* near the community of Tila, Chiapas State (see UA 351/97, AMR 41/103/97, 6 November 1997). To Amnesty International's knowledge there have been no attempts by the authorities to bring those responsible to justice.

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

- calling for immediate measures to be taken to ensure the safe return of at least 100 families to their communities in the municipality of Chenalhó, Chiapas State;
- urging that a prompt and thorough investigation be conducted into the attacks carried out reportedly by members of the paramilitary group, *Máscara Roja*, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing alarm at the increasing reports of serious human rights violations in Chiapas State, reportedly by members of paramilitary groups, and the lack of effort to bring them to account for their acts;
- requesting to be kept informed of the results of any investigations carried out concerning the recent attacks in the municipality of Chenalhó.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Governor of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Julio César Ruiz Ferro  
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas  
Palacio de Gobierno  
Av. Central y Primera Oriente  
Colonia Centro, 29009 Tuxtla Gutiérrez  
Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

**Telegrams: Gobernador Ruiz Ferro, Chiapas, México**

**Faxes: +52 961 20917 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor**

2) Attorney General, Chiapas

Marco Antonio Besares Escobar  
Procurador General de Chiapas  
Procuraduría General  
Tuxtla Gutiérrez  
Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

**Telegrams: Procurador General de Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico**

**Faxes: + 52 9 616 5376 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")**

**Salutation: Procurador General, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization

Comisión de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas"  
Apartado postal 178  
San Cristóbal de las Casas  
29250 Chiapas  
MEXICO

Newspaper

Sr. Editor  
La Jornada  
Balderas 68  
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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 15 January 1998.