

Mexico

New president brings hope for prisoners of conscience

Army general José Francisco Gallardo Rodríguez and peasant environmentalists Rodolfo Montiel Flores and Teodoro Cabrera García are prisoners of conscience who continue to languish in jail.

However, since President Vicente Fox assumed power in December 2000, expectations that they could soon be released have been heightened. Since his election in July 2000 President Fox has repeatedly pledged full respect for human rights.

General Gallardo has been a prisoner since November 1993. He was arrested in connection with the publication of an article in which he accused Mexico's armed forces of human rights violations and called for the appointment of a military ombudsman. In 1998 he was sentenced by a military court to 28 years in prison for embezzlement and damaging military property. In 1996 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recommended that he be "immediately released". Last December General Gallardo became a member of AI.

Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera were detained in May 1999 solely because of their peaceful activism in favour of protecting forests in Guerrero state from excessive logging. They were tortured by the military and subsequently charged by a public prosecutor with drugs- and firearms-related offences. Last July Mexico's National Commission for Human Rights published a report which stated that two army officers "had violated the fundamental rights" of both peasants, including the right "not to be subjected to torture". In October a court upheld their prison sentences of six years and eight months and 10 years respectively.

+Please write calling for the immediate and unconditional release of José Francisco Gallardo Rodríguez, Rodolfo Montiel Flores and Teodoro Cabrera García. Send appeals to: Lic. Vicente Fox Quesada, President of the Republic, Palacio Nacional, México D.F., C.P. 06067 México. Telegrams: Presidente Vicente Fox Quesada, México D.F., México. Fax: + 52 5 515 5729/277 2376 or 515 1794.

China

Misuse of psychiatric hospitalization to suppress political dissent

Veteran human rights activist and prisoner of conscience Wang Wanxing was forcibly removed from his home by eight public security officers and returned to Ankang psychiatric hospital in Beijing on 23 November 1999. There has been no further news of him.

Wang Wanxing was first detained in hospital in June 1992 for unfurling a banner in Tiananmen Square to commemorate the anniversary of the pro-democracy protests of June 1989. On that occasion his wife was informed that he was suffering from "political monomania", which is not an internationally recognized medical term and would appear to imply political obsessiveness.

In August 1999 Wang Wanxing was released for a three-month trial period during which he was prohibited from contacting the media or pro-democracy activists. At the end of this trial period, on 18 November 1999, Wang Wanxing asked the authorities if he could hold a press conference to discuss his confinement. A week later, he was forcibly returned to Ankang psychiatric hospital, which is managed by the Beijing National Security Bureau.

There is no evidence that Wang Wanxing has any form of mental illness and AI believes that he is being confined to a psychiatric institution in order to suppress his right to freedom of expression and belief.

+Please write calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Wang Wanxing and express concern that he is being held in psychiatric detention for the peaceful expression of his beliefs rather than on strictly medical grounds.

Send appeals to: Mayor of Beijing Municipal People's Government, Liu Qi Shizhang, Beijingshi Renmin Zhengfu, 2 Zhengyilu, Dongchengqu, Beijingshi 100744, People's Republic of China. Telegram: Mayor, Beijing, China; and to: Minister of Public Health of the People's Republic of China, Zhang Wenkang Buzhang, Weishengbu, 44 Houhai Beiyuan, Gulou Xidajie, Beijingshi, People's Republic of China. Telegram: Minister of Public Health, c/o Minister of Public Security, Beijing, China.

Egypt

Prisoners of conscience sentenced after unfair trials

Manal Wahid Mana'i was sentenced to five years' imprisonment on 5 September 2000 for "offending religion" amid allegations that she is the leader of a religious group.

Her husband, 'Abd al-Hamid Muhammad Kamil, and two others, Hisham 'Abd Abu Farikha and Muhammad Sharif al-Damardash, were sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Other alleged followers of the religious group were imprisoned for up to one year but have since been released.

Manal Wahid Mana'i, a political science graduate and mother of five, was arrested along with several others in December 1999 in Cairo. They were accused of attributing divine status to a late Sufi sheikh.

Her trial was opened on 7 June 2000 before the Emergency State Security Court for Misdemeanours in the Cairo district of al-Sayida Zainab. This court denies defendants the right to appeal against its verdicts and sentences. All of the defendants remained in detention during the course of the trial.

+Please write calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience, Manal Wahid Mana'i, 'Abd al-Hamid Muhammad Kamil, Hisham 'Abd Abu Farikha and Muhammad Sharif al-Damardash. Send appeals to: His Excellency, President Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, 'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt. Fax: + 202 390 1998. E-mail: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg