

PUBLIC

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12 February 2009

Further Information on UA 314/08 (AMR 41/059/2008, 14 November 2008) – Prisoners of conscience and new concern: Fear for safety

MEXICO           Raúl Hernández (m)           ]  
                      Manuel Cruz (m)            ] members of Me'phaa Indigenous People's Organization  
                      Orlando Manzanarez (m)    ] (OPIM)  
                      Natalio Ortega (m)         ]  
                      Romualdo Santiago (m)     ]  
                      Eight others members of OPIM

New names: Rafael Rodriguez Dircio (m)  
              Obtilia Eugenio Manuel (f)

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OPIM member Rafael Rodriguez Dircio was threatened with death on 4 February by a supporter of the local *cacique* (political boss) in the community of El Camalote, Guerrero State.

The man, who had a gun, approached Rafael Rodriguez and said, "I am going to kill you, your life will soon be up, human rights aren't worth anything, you aren't worth anything." (*te voy a matar con poquito tiempo viven ustedes, los derechos humanos no valen nada, ustedes no valen nada.*)

Rafael Rodriguez is one of 15 OPIM members who have been accused of the 1 January 2008 killing of Alejandro Feliciano García; OPIM say he was one of the *cacique's* supporters. The first five named above have already been arrested, and are detained in Ayutla prison, Guerrero State. They are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful opposition to the *cacique* while defending the rights of members of their indigenous community. According to their families, since the men have been detained, their children have been stigmatized and discriminated against in their school by the head teacher, who the families say is one of the *cacique's* supporters, and other students have called them "sons of criminals" (*hijos de delincuentes*).

The threat against Rafael Rodriguez is part of a concerted pattern of harassment of OPIM members in reprisal for their legitimate work defending human rights. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has responded by asking the Mexican government to provide protection to over 100 members of the organization, including Rafael Rodriguez and all the others named above.

OPIM founder member Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, was followed by a van with tinted windows on 24 January. A few days before this, she had been followed to an OPIM meeting by three vans; in the third van she recognised a man who had been continually harassing her, whom she had already reported to the authorities. Another man in the third van shouted to her: "Do you think you're so brave? Are you a real woman? Let's hope you also go to prison...If you don't go to prison, we'll kill you." (*Te sientes muy valiente, que eres de verdad una mujer? Ojala tu tambien te vayas a la carcel..... Si no se van a la carcel los vamos a matar.*)

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

- urging the authorities to release the five OPIM members detained in Ayutla prison (naming them) immediately and unconditionally;
- calling on them to order an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the recent threats and acts of harassment against Rafael Rodriguez Dircio and Obtilia Eugenio Manuel;
- urging them to ensure that the children of the five OPIM members in Ayutla prison can attend school without fear of discrimination or stigmatization;
- urging them to ensure that the 100 OPIM members named by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights receive all the protection that the Commission has requested for them.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor of Guerrero

Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo

Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero

Palacio de Gobierno, Edificio Centro, piso 2, Ciudad de los Servicios

CP 39075, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO

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**Fax:** +52 747 471 9956

**Salutation:** Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor

Attorney General of Guerrero

Lic. Eduardo Murueta Urrutia

Procurador del Estado de Guerrero

Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6+300

Tramo Chilpancingo-Petaquillos

Chilpancingo 39090, Guerrero, MEXICO

**Fax:** +52 747 494 2981

**Salutation:** Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza

Procurador General de la República

Procuraduría General de la República

Av. Paseo de la Reforma nº 211-213, Piso 16

Col. Cuauhtémoc, Delegación Cuauhtémoc

México D.F., C.P. 06500, MEXICO

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**Salutation:** Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador General

**COPIES TO:**

Human rights organisation

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña "Tlachinollan" AC., Calle Mina, no. 77, Col. Centro, Tlapa de Comonfort, C.P. 41304, 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 26 March 2009