

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 41/18/94

Distr: UA/SC

UA 351/94 Fear for safety / Extrajudicial executions 22 September 1994

**MEXICO** **Rolando Hernández Hernández, 17, Indian peasant activist**  
**Atanacio Hernández Hernández, 28, Indian peasant activist**

---

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of members of the Nahua and Otomí Indian peasant community of Plan del Encinal, in Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz, following the arbitrary arrest, torture and extrajudicial execution of two of their leaders.

On 17 September 1994 the mutilated bodies of Rolando Hernández Hernández and Atanacio Hernández Hernández were found with injuries which reportedly included short-range gunshot wounds to the head and chest. The two men had last been seen alive on 8 September when their community was raided by scores of members of the *Seguridad Pública* (state police) and dozens of unidentified armed men who forcibly evicted the Indian community.

During the raid, Rolando and Atanacio, who were both members of an Indian peasants' rights movement called the *Organización de Pueblos Etnicos José María Morelos y Pavón (OPEMORELOS)*, were reportedly wounded by the police. They were then arbitrarily arrested and transferred to a nearby ranch named "Las Tejas", and were not seen again until their bodies were discovered in a nearby river on 17 September.

According to the latest reports received by Amnesty International, the peasants have fled their community, which remains surrounded by members of the security forces. They cannot return for fear for their safety.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

For the past 64 years, the Nahua and Otomí Indian peasants from the community of Plan del Encinal, Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz, have been unsuccessful in their claims to their original land rights over land presently belonging to a neighbouring ranch called "Las Tejas". On 21 August 1994 they peacefully occupied the disputed land. According to reports received by Amnesty International, the local land owner summoned government security forces and private guards to forcibly evict the peasants and arrest their leaders, living in the nearby community of Plan del Encinal.

Amnesty International has recorded a long lasting pattern of rural violence related to land-tenure conflicts in Mexico. The most frequent victims of this violence are the poor indigenous peasants who lose their lands to big ranchers, known as "caciques". The frequent association of *caciques* to local authorities seriously undermine the legal rights to land tenure of Indian peasants and places them at risk of human rights violations.

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

- expressing grave concern about the arbitrary arrest and reported extra-judicial execution of Indian peasant activists Rolando Hernández Hernández and Atanacio Hernández Hernández, and calling for an immediate, full and impartial investigation into their detention and deaths. Those responsible should be brought to justice and the relatives should receive adequate compensation;
- expressing serious concern for the safety of Nahua and Otomí peasants from

Plan del Encinal, Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz, who were forced to flee their community after the violent eviction on 8 September;

- expressing dismay over the Mexican government's apparent failure to implement a policy of full respect and protection of the human rights of ethnic minorities, and concern about the impunity which continues to benefit those responsible for gross human rights violations against the indigenous people.

**APPEALS TO**

**1) President of the Republic**

Lic. Carlos Salinas de Gortari

Presidente de la República

Palacio Nacional

06067 México D.F., México

**Telegrams: Presidente Salinas, México D.F., México**

**Telexes: 170937 sppnme; 1774468 sppnme**

**Faxes: +52 5 271 1764**

**Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear President**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Fundación de Apoyo a la Comunidad, A.C.

Arquidiócesis de México

Durango No 90 7o Piso

Col. Roma México D.F.

C.P. 06700 MEXICO

**Faxes: +52 5 2085961**

**and to diplomatic representatives of accredited to your country**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your Section Office, if sending appeals after 3 November 1994.