

PUBLIC

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UA 03/06 Possible prisoner of conscience/ fear for safety

MEXICO **Martín Barrios Hernández (m), coordinator of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán*)**

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Human rights defender and trade unionist Martín Barrios Hernández is being detained by police in the state of Puebla on charges of blackmail, in an apparent attempt to prevent him carrying out his legitimate human rights work. Soon after 4pm local time (five hours behind GMT) on 4 January, Martín Barrios Hernández will know whether he is to be prosecuted or released. Amnesty International believes that Martín Barrios Hernández may be a prisoner of conscience.

Martín Barrios Hernández is the coordinator of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán*) in the State of Puebla. In recent months, the Commission has been supporting workers from the "*Calidad de Confecciones*" textile plant, who have been campaigning for greater rights. According to reports, the owner of the plant filed charges of blackmail against him with the agency within the *Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado*, Public Prosecutor's Office, which deals with kidnapping cases. Martín Barrios Hernández was not informed of the charges until December 29 when police arrived at his house to arrest him. He has denied the charges against him. He is currently held in prison in the city of Puebla. Under Mexican law, defence and prosecution may provide evidence during 72 hour period (or 142 hours if the defendant requests) before a judge decides whether there is enough evidence to prosecute them. A decision is due to be made on the charges against Martín Barrios Hernández after 4pm on 4 January. As blackmail is considered a serious criminal offence in the State of Puebla, Martín Barrios Hernández would not be eligible to be released on bail if the charges stand.

In recent months, owners of *maquilas* (assembly plants) in the Tehuacan valley have made public accusations that Martín Barrios Hernández and the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley are responsible for organizing protests and strikes that discourage foreign investment. Martín Barrios Hernández has previously been threatened and intimidated as a result of his human rights activities. On 30 December 2003 he was seriously assaulted outside his home (see UA 26/04, AMR 41/004/2004, 21 January 2004). No one has yet been brought to justice for the attack.

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

- expressing concern at the detention of the human rights defender Martín Barrios Hernández on 29 December in the municipality of Tehuacan;
- expressing concern that Martín Barrios Hernández may be a prisoner of conscience, as his detention is an apparent attempt to prevent him from carrying out his legitimate human rights work;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that any judicial proceedings against Martín Barrios Hernández are conducted according to international fair trial standards, and that he will have the right to equality before the law.

**APPEALS TO:**

State Governor of Puebla  
Lic. Martio Marín Torres  
Gobernador del Estado de Puebla

**E-mail:** [gobernador@puebla.gob.mx](mailto:gobernador@puebla.gob.mx)  
**Salutation:** Dear Governor/ Estimado Gobernador

Attorney General of Puebla  
Maestra Blanca Laura Villeda Martínez  
Procuradora General de Justicia del Estado de Puebla  
**Fax:** + 52 222 240 8105 (please keep trying)  
**E-mail:** [titular.pgj@puebla.gob.mx](mailto:titular.pgj@puebla.gob.mx)  
**Salutation:** Dear Attorney General/Estimada Procuradora

**COPIES TO:**

Coalition of NGOs in Puebla  
Red Cualí Nemilistli de Derechos Humanos  
**E-mail:** [comunicacion@cualinemilistli.org](mailto:comunicacion@cualinemilistli.org)

Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán  
Boulevard Heroe de Nacozy 210  
Colonia Zaragoza  
Tehuacán  
C.P. 75770 Puebla, MEXICO

and to diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BY E-MAIL IMMEDIATELY.**