

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IMPRISONED UNJUSTLY

Two Indigenous women from Mexico, detained for three years for a crime they did not commit, will learn within the next few weeks whether their sentences will be confirmed or overturned. They are prisoners of conscience and should be released immediately.

Alberta Alcántara Juan and **Teresa González Cornelio**, Otomí Indigenous women from the community of Santiago Mexquititlán, Querétaro state, have been detained since 3 August 2006. They were arrested with a third Indigenous woman, Jacinta Francisco Marcial, and charged with kidnapping six Federal Investigation Agency (AFI) agents.

On 26 March 2006, the six AFI agents entered the main market in Santiago Mexquititlán. They claimed to be trying to locate drugs and illegal DVDs, but failed to provide a warrant or identify themselves, and damaged stallholders' merchandise. The agents tried to confiscate goods, and as tensions rose, vendors punctured some of the agents' car tyres. According to members of the community, the incident ended peacefully later that day. However, that evening, the agents filed a complaint with the Federal Attorney General's Office, alleging that they had been kidnapped for several hours by the protestors. Local lawyers believe there are no grounds to allege a kidnapping took place.

More than four months later, the three women were arrested and charged with the kidnapping. They were each sentenced to 21 years in prison. The only evidence against them was a photograph published in a local newspaper in which the three women are seen standing next to the AFI agents. Amnesty International believes that the imprisonment of the three women was in retaliation for the way the local market stallholders reacted on 26 March 2006. The organization considers that the charges against the three were fabricated and that they were framed as convenient targets simply because of their marginal status in society as poor Indigenous women. All three women won an appeal against their conviction in April 2009, prompting a retrial, at which no new evidence was presented. Jacinta Francisco Marcial was released in September 2009, when the Federal Attorney General's Office decided to drop the case during the retrial due to a lack of evidence. However, the Federal Attorney General's Office decided to continue to press charges against Teresa and Alberta and seek their reconviction, even though their case relied on the same evidence. The final hearing of the women's retrial was held on 3 February. The judge was given 30 working days from 3 February to issue a verdict.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

■ Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Alberta Alcántara Juan and Teresa González Cornelio stating the belief that they are prisoners of conscience

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 MARCH 2010 TO:

President

Lic. Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa
 Presidente de la República Mexicana
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Salutation: Estimado Presidente / Dear
 President

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont
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 Secretario de Gobernación
 Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez,
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Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

Governor of Queretaro

Lic. José E. Calzada Roviroza
 Gobernador del Estado de Querétaro
 Palacio de la Corregidora
 Pasteur esq. 5 de Mayo, Centro
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Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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