

PUBLIC

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28 April 2008

UA 113/08 Fear for safety

MEXICO **Melchor López (m), director of Radio Mixteca
Workers with community radio station *La voz que rompe el silencio* and other community
radio stations in the indigenous Mixteca region**

Melchor Lopez is the director of a small commercial radio station Radio Mixteca, based in the town of Santiago Juchitán, in the southern state of Oaxaca. On 17 April he was followed by men in a white jeep when he left work; men driving a white jeep fired shots at his house the following morning. He has been forced to seek safety in Mexico City. He had received repeated death threats since he set up the radio station in April 2007, from people trying to secure control of the radio station for their political interests.

Two young indigenous Triqui women, who worked for an indigenous community radio station, had been shot dead on 7 April as they travelled by car to the main Triqui town of San Juan Copala, not far from Santiago Juchitán. The two women, Felicitas Martínez and Teresa Bautista, worked for a local indigenous community radio station *La voz que rompe el silencio* (The Voice that Breaks the Silence) in San Juan Copala, which had received repeated death threats since it began broadcasting in January 2008. The four other people working at the radio station, and others providing technical support to the community radio network in the region, are also in danger.

A few days after the killing of Felicitas Martínez and Teresa Bautista, the Oaxaca State Attorney General told local journalists, without giving any reason, that the women had not been the target of the attack. The National Human Rights Commission called on the state government to provide protection to the staff of *La voz que rompe el silencio* and their families, but they have not yet done so.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Mixtec area of Oaxaca in southern Mexico, particularly the Triqui region, is one of the poorest and most troubled in the country. There are 15,000 Triqui speaking peoples in the area. Over 1000 members of the community have been murdered there since 1948 in political and land disputes. In the vast majority of cases, those responsible have not been brought to justice.

In January 2007, the historic centre of Triqui indigenous culture, San Juan Copala, voted to establish an autonomous municipality, separate from the official municipal authorities, based in neighbouring towns such as Santiago Juchitán, which had absorbed the original Triqui municipality in 1948. Many of the Triqui population blamed political bosses (*caciques*) allied to the official municipal authorities for promoting division within the community, along clan and other lines, and violence in the Triqui region. The Voice that Breaks the Silence had been established to support the new autonomous municipality, provide information to the local community and promote reconciliation between the groups that had been divided.

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

- calling on the authorities to protect Melchor Lopez, director of Radio Mixteca in accordance with his wishes;
- calling on them to order a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the intimidation he suffered on 17 April and bring those responsible to justice;

- expressing concern for the safety of those working with the indigenous community radio station *La voz que rompe el Silencio* in San Juan Copala and other community radio stations in the Mixteca region, and urging the authorities to do everything necessary to protect them, in accordance with their own wishes;
- calling for a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the murder of Felicitas Martínez and Teresa Bautista, for the results to be published and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities that it is their duty to ensure those responsible for attacks on media workers are held to account in order to prevent future attacks and create a climate in which journalists can exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisal.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Juan Camilo Mouriño Terrazo

Secretaría de Gobernación

Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc, México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 5093 3414

E-mail: secretario@segob.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Minister

Governor of Oaxaca

Lic. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz

Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca

Carretera Oaxaca-Puerto Angel, Km. 9.5, Santa María Coyotepec, Oaxaca C.P. 71254, Oaxaca, MEXICO

Fax: +52 951 517 8120

E-mail: gobernador@oaxaca.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor

State Attorney General of Oaxaca

Lic. Evencio Nicolás Martínez Ramírez

Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Oaxaca

Avenida Luis Echeverría s/n, Col. La Experimental, San Antonio de la Cal, Oaxaca C.P. 71236, Oaxaca, MEXICO

Fax: +52 951 511 5519

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Procurador

President of the National Human Rights Commission

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández, Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos,

Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, Edificio "Héctor Fix Zamudio", 6° piso

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Salutation: Señor Presidente/Dear President

COPIES TO:

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Oaxaca, Huajuapán de León 69007, 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 9 June 2008.