

PUBLIC

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18 June 2007

UA 155/07 Fear for safety/Death threats

MEXICO **Jesús Manuel Grijalva Mejía (m), human rights defender**
Mayen Arellanes Cano (f), human rights defender

Two lawyers working on behalf of protesters arrested in Oaxaca state, lawyers Jesús Manuel Grijalva and Mayen Arellanes, have been threatened over the past few weeks, apparently in reprisal for their human rights work with the *Comité de Liberación 25 de Noviembre* (Committee for the Liberation of Detainees of 25 November). Amnesty International believes their lives may be in danger.

On 14 June, Jesús Manuel Grijalva received a call on his mobile phone from a man who said, *ya te tengo ubicado* ("I know where you are") and threatening him, *ora si te voy a matar porque no entiendes hijo de la chingada* ("Now I'm gonna kill you 'cause you don't get it, you son of a bitch"). According to Jesús Manuel Grijalva, this is the same voice that had threatened him on four consecutive days at the beginning of April. Jesús Manuel Grijalva said that the phone call had been made from Mexico City.

On 14 April, as he was checking facts at the crime scene where José Jiménez Colmenares was killed (see UA 218/06, AMR 41/040/2006, 11 August 2006) against documents from the judicial case file, he was reportedly approached by eight men travelling in a black van without number plates. The men were wearing black uniforms but no insignia to identify them as members of any specific police force. One of them asked questions about the file Jesús Manuel Grijalva was carrying, but the men left soon after communicating their position over the radio and as soon as a group of passers-by started to gather around the area.

On 28 May, his colleague Mayen Arellanes was verbally abused by a group of young men outside Oaxaca University. She had never seen them before, but they appeared to know who she was as they referred to her activities in the *Comité*. On the same day, she was also verbally attacked as she was walking near her home by men driving in a car without number plates. Previously, Mayen Arellanes had reported that her home had been watched by men inside a car with tinted windows on 1 May.

The *Comité de Liberación 25 de Noviembre* was established in the aftermath of the clashes between protesters and police on 25 November 2006, which resulted in the detention of 149 people, many of whom were not involved in the protests or violence. Most of those arrested on 25 November have been released on bail facing criminal charges. Only eight people are still in custody, on charges related to recent social protests in Oaxaca. The members of the *Comité* provide legal assistance to and campaign on behalf of all those arrested during the Oaxaca political crisis. Amnesty International has documented previous cases of harassment of human right defenders in Oaxaca (see UA 334/06, AMR 41/060/2006, 15 December 2006 and follow-ups and UA 323/06, AMR 41/056/2006, 29 November 2006).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2006, widespread protests erupted in the state of Oaxaca, led by the *Asamblea Popular del Pueblo de Oaxaca* (APPO), the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca, in an unsuccessful campaign to force the state governor to resign. Political violence and demonstrations continued throughout the year by armed civilians linked to the local government and police as well as some supporters of the APPO. Twenty civilians were reportedly killed during the conflict; at least 370 were injured and 349 arrested. There were widespread reports of use of excessive force, arbitrary detention, torture and fabrication of criminal charges against protesters. Federal, state and municipal authorities responsible for abuses have not been held to account. While the political violence has declined, tensions remain high.

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

- expressing concern at the intimidation of human rights defenders Jesús Manuel Grijalva and Mayen Arellanes, and of other individuals and organizations working to protect human rights in the state of Oaxaca, especially the *Comité de Liberación 25 de Noviembre*;
- calling for a thorough and impartial investigation into the threats received by Jesús Manuel Grijalva on 14 June and the harassment he suffered on 14 April in Oaxaca City, with those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to investigate the intimidation suffered by Mayen Arellanes on 28 May;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they receive protection, in accordance with their wishes;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Francisco Javier Ramírez Acuña

Secretario de Gobernación, Secretaría de Gobernación

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

Fax: +52 55 5093 3414

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: +52 951 502 0530 (if a voice answers, ask "me da tono de fax, por favor")

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 Prosecutor/Estimado Procurador

COPIES TO:

President of the National Human Rights Commission

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

Periférico Sur 3469, 5º piso, Col. San Jerónimo Lídice, México D.F. 10200, MEXICO

Red Oaxaqueña de derechos humanos

Calle Crespo 524 Interior 4-E, Col. Centro, Oaxaca, Oaxaca, CP. 68000, 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 30 July 2007.