

URGENT ACTION

VILLAGERS THREATENED

The inhabitants of a village in southern Mexico, have been attacked repeatedly by a group of armed men, who have now chased away the police officers who were meant to protect them. These men have blocked the road to the village, and the villagers have no protection.

About 100 men armed with guns, machetes and sticks came to Santo Domingo Ixcatlán, Oaxaca state, on 11 October. They attacked the six state police officers who had been sent to protect the villagers, slashing one of them with a machete. The policemen fled the village. The armed men then went and set up barricades on all roads into the village. Among the villagers trapped in Santo Domingo Ixcatlán is human rights defender María de la Luz Martínez, who works for the Centre for Human Rights and Advice for Indigenous People (*Centro de Derechos Humanos y Asesoría a Pueblos Indígenas*, CEDHAPI).

The group of armed men work for a local political boss (*cacique*) closely connected to the municipal authorities. Since early 2008, they have been threatening and intimidating members of the community who oppose the sale of community lands. The sale of those lands would bring profit to the municipal authorities and the *cacique*. In April 2008, three community members opposed to the sale were killed in the village. In December 2008, the same group of armed men besieged the village and threatened to kill the inhabitants. In May 2009, Maria de la Luz Martínez was threatened with death by relatives of the *cacique*.

The *cacique* was arrested in May for the killing of the three men, but others accused of involvement in the killings are still at large, though there are open warrants for their arrest. They are believed to be among the armed men.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ordered the Mexican authorities in 2008 to provide protection for the villagers and members of CEDHAPI, who work with them. However, the authorities have not sent enough police officers to provide protection.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- √ calling on the authorities to provide effective protection to the community of Santo Domingo Ixcatlán, and reopen safe routes into the village;
- √ urging them to order a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the activities of the armed group, intimidating the inhabitants of Santo Domingo Ixcatlán, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- √ calling on them to arrest immediately those still sought for the April 2008 killings.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont
 Secretario de Gobernación
 Secretaría de Gobernación
 Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez
 México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO
Fax: +52 55 5093 3414
E-mail: secretario@segob.gob.mx
Salutation: Señor Secretario/
Dear Minister

Oaxaca Public Security Minister

Lic. Javier Rueda Velazquez
 Secretaría de Seguridad Pública
 Heroico Colegio Militar 317,
 Col. Reforma, Oaxaca,
 C.P. 68050, MEXICO
Fax: +52 951 5020 800 then say "me da tono de fax por favor"
Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Minister

Oaxaca State Attorney General

Lic. Evencio Nicolas Ramirez
 Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado de Oaxaca
 Avenida Luis Echeverría S/N, La Experimental, San Antonio de la Cal,
 Oax. CP. 68270, MEXICO
Fax: +52 951 5115 519
Salutation: Señor Procurador/Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO: CEDHAPI, email: cedhapi@yahoo.com.mx and to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Communities who try to defend their lands and stand up to private interests have frequently been threatened and harassed, often by state and municipal authorities colluding with *caciques*. Those responsible are rarely identified or brought to justice. The authorities in states with sizeable Indigenous populations, especially southern states such as Oaxaca, frequently fail to provide essential services to these communities, and allow *caciques* to maintain control over communities and commit crimes including murder with impunity.

The community of Santo Domingo Ixcatlán was previously the subject of UA 129/08 (AMR 41/023/2008, 16 May 2008 and AMR 41/064/2008, 5 December 2008)

UA: 283/09 Index: AMR 41/055/2009 Issue Date: 16 October 2009

