

09 March 2009

UA 68/09

Fear for safety

MEXICO

Marcelino Coache Verano (m), and his family

On 4 March, Marcelino Coache, union activist and leading member of the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (Asamblea Popular del Pueblo de Oaxaca, APPO), was abducted from Oaxaca City, tortured for several hours and released the following morning. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

Marcelino Coache was stopped in the city centre by three men, one of whom wore a blue uniform, just after he had left a Union meeting. The men told him that he was under arrest and flashed a badge. They then bundled Marcelino Coache into a nearby van, tied him and put a sack over his head so that he could not see where he was being driven to. After a two hour drive, Marcelino Coache heard the vehicle stop and a gate being opened. Once inside a building, he was made to remove his clothes. His captors interrogated him about his finances and his family although no ransom demand was made for his release.

The men punched and hit him repeatedly with the butt of a gun and burned him with cigarettes around his nipples and genitals. After a few hours, he heard one man enter the room who said "this is one of the rebels" Zaachila municipality, about 30 km from Oaxaca City, at about 3.30 AM on 5 March. He managed to secure a lift from a taxi and was driven straight to hospital for medical attention.

Two days later Marcelino Coache called a press conference to report the incident. During the conference Marcelino Coache announced that he would not file a complaint with the State Attorney General's office as he believes that the state authorities may be implicated in his abduction. Marcelino Coache fears for the safety of himself and his family. A local human rights organisation has sent his case details to the Inter American Commission for Human Rights to apply for precautionary measures.

Marcelino Coache has experienced several serious incidents previously, including threats and physical attacks. In August 2008, his son received a phone call saying "we're going to smash your father's head in" (le vamos a romper la madre a tu papá). In January 2008, a man attempted to stab him in the abdomen as he was getting out of his car, but only caused a superficial wound and in August 2007, he was struck with a gun and had his face held to the ground by a policeman who told him to stop being a rebel ("ya parale de revoltoso").

In December 2006, Marcelino Coache was arrested along with other APPO leaders and accused of arson, sedition and resisting arrest. He was acquitted after spending more than six months in prison.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2006, widespread protests erupted in the state of Oaxaca, led by APPO, in an unsuccessful campaign to force the state governor to resign. Political violence and demonstrations continued throughout the year. At least 18 civilians were reportedly killed during the conflict; at least 370 were injured and 349 were arrested. There were widespread reports of use of excessive force, arbitrary detention, torture and fabrication of criminal charges against protesters. On 16 July 2007 there were further violent clashes between police and protestors that resulted in more than 40 people detained and scores injured. Federal, state and municipal authorities responsible for abuses have not been held to account. While the political violence has declined, tensions remain high. Human rights organizations continue to campaign for justice in relation to human rights violations.

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

- urging the authorities to ensure that Marcelino Coache and his family are given appropriate protection in accordance with their wishes, following his abduction and torture on 04 March;
- calling on the authorities to conduct a prompt and impartial investigation into the abduction and torture of Marcelino Coache Verano and to establish whether security officials were involved and to bring those responsible to account.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza
Procuraduría General de la República
Av. Paseo de la Reforma n° 211-213, Piso 16
Col. Cuauhtémoc, Delegación Cuauhtémoc
México D.F., C.P. 06500, MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 53 46 09 08

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador General

Minister of Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont Urueta
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 Ortíz
Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca
Carretera Oaxaca-Puerto Ángel, Km. 9.5, Santa María Coyotepec,
Oaxaca C.P. 71254, Oaxaca, MEXICO

Fax: +52 951 517 5890

E-mail: gobernador@oaxaca.gob.mx

COPIES TO:

Human Rights organization

Centro de Derechos Humanos "Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño", Mariano Azuela 203, Col. José Vasconcelos
Oaxaca, México, Email: barcadh@prodigy.net.mx

Oaxaca State Human Rights Commission

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Oaxaca, Calle de los Derechos Humanos no. 210, C.P. 68050, Oaxaca,
MEXICO, E-mail: correo@cedhoax.org, Fax: +52 951 503 0220 (if a voice answers, ask "me da tono de fax, por favor").

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 21 April.