

PUBLIC

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15 June 2007

UA 151/07      Fear for safety

MEXICO      Misael Sánchez Sarmiento (m), journalist

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Journalist Misael Sánchez Sarmiento, who writes for the Oaxacan newspaper *Tiempo*, was shot and wounded on 12 June near his home, on the outskirts of Oaxaca City. Amnesty International is concerned that he is at risk of further attacks, and that his life is in grave danger.

On the evening of 12 June, Misael Sánchez reportedly returned to his home in town of Etna, near Oaxaca City, after work. At 8.30 pm, he and his wife went outside to fetch something from their car, parked nearby, and a gunman in the street fired at Misael Sánchez approximately six times, hitting him four times and wounding him in the face, neck and leg. Misael Sánchez was hospitalized: he was seriously injured, but his life is not in danger.

There is no clear indication of the motive for the attack on Misael Sánchez. *Tiempo* supports the Oaxaca state government. During a political crisis in the state which began in mid-2006, he has frequently published articles critical of social organizations and the local opposition movement, the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca, *Asamblea Popular del Pueblo de Oaxaca* (APPO), which has led protests demanding the resignation of the state governor.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2006 widespread protests erupted in the state of Oaxaca, led by the APPO, in an unsuccessful campaign to force the resignation of the state governor. Political violence and demonstrations continued throughout the year, with several media outlets being occupied, and journalists attacked and threatened, by armed civilians linked to the local government and police as well as supporters of the APPO. Twenty civilians were reportedly killed during the conflict, at least 370 were injured and 349 arrests were made. 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. At least eight APPO supporters remain in custody and hundreds of others are on bail facing criminal charges. While the political violence has declined, tensions remain high.

During the political crisis media workers came under attack from both sides. One journalist, Bradley Will, was killed (see Further Information on UA 227/06, AMR 41/050/2006, 31 October August 2006), and several others were attacked and threatened. Those responsible have not been held to account. Nationwide, Mexico has seen an escalation in the violence against journalists, with at least 11 killings since the beginning of 2006 (see UA 87/07, AMR 41/014/2007, 16 April 2007) and several abductions. In acknowledgement of the rising attacks on journalists around the country and the failure of state authorities to hold those responsible to account, the federal authorities established the Office of Special Prosecutor on Crimes against Journalists (*Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos Cometidos contra Periodistas*) in February 2006 to improve investigation of such cases. However, there is almost total impunity for such crimes, as the Special Federal Prosecutor has failed to ensure successful prosecutions in any of the more than 100 cases under investigation.

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

- expressing concern at the shooting of Misael Sánchez Sarmiento on 12 June in Etna, Oaxaca State;

- calling on the authorities to ensure that Misael Sánchez receives protection measures to guarantee his safety in accordance with his wishes;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation by the federal authorities into the attack on Misael Sánchez;
- reminding the authorities of their duty to ensure those responsible for attacks on journalists 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:**

Special Federal Prosecutor on Crimes against Journalists

Lic. Octavio Alberto Orellana Wiarco  
Fiscal Especial para la Atención de Delitos Cometidos contra Periodistas  
Procuraduría General de la República  
Av. Paseo de la Reforma #211-213  
Col. Cuauhtémoc, Del. Cuauhtémoc, C.P. 06500, México D.F., MEXICO  
**Fax: +52 55 53 46 09 08**  
**Salutation: Dear Sir/Señor Fiscal Especial**

Governor of Oaxaca

Lic. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz  
Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca  
Carretera Oaxaca-Puerto Angel, Km. 9.5, Santa María Coyotepec, Oaxaca, Oaxaca C. P. 71254, MEXICO  
**Fax: +52 951 502 0530 (if a voice answers, ask "tono de fax, por favor")**  
**E-mail: gobernador@oaxaca.gob.mx**  
**Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor**

Attorney General of Oaxaca

Lic. Evencio Nicolás Martínez Ramírez  
Procurador del Estado de Oaxaca  
Avenida Luis Echeverría s/n, Col. La Experimental, San Antonio de la Cal, Oaxaca, Oaxaca 71236, MEXICO  
**Fax: +52 951 511 5519**  
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Procurador**

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**

**COPIES TO:**

President of the National Human Rights Commission

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández  
Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)  
Periférico Sur 3469, 5º piso, Col. San Jerónimo Lídice, México D.F. 10200, 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 27 July 2007.