

PUBLIC

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Fear for

**MEXICO Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Customs,
Santiago Xanica, Oaxaca state**

Members of an indigenous Zapotec group in southern Mexico have been shot at and threatened, reportedly by supporters of the ruling political party. Because the authorities have taken no action, tensions are high in the community, threatening further violence. Amnesty International is concerned for the group's safety.

The Comité por la Defensa de Usos y Costumbres, Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Customs, defends the political rights of the indigenous people of Santiago Xanica. Between 27 April 1999 and 5 January 2000 six members of the group were attacked, reportedly by members of the ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), Institutional Revolutionary Party. On 5 September 1999, Juan Cruz López was shot in the back by a PRI supporter. Joel Díaz López denounced the crime to the municipal authorities, and returned to his house to find a group of men who shot at him four times, wounding him once.

The Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Customs has denounced all the attacks to the competent authorities. The authorities have failed to investigate these crimes, and Amnesty International has learned that this has led to mounting tensions between PRI supporters and Committee members, threatening further violence in the community.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1998 the *Ley de Usos y Costumbres*, Law of Indigenous Customs, was passed in Oaxaca state. However, in practice these rights are often denied, fuelling conflict within communities. The ruling PRI at the local level often plays an important role in protecting those responsible for human rights violations. The authorities' failure to properly investigate such crimes often leads to an escalation of violence.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of members of the *Comité por la Defensa de Usos y Costumbres*, Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Customs, six of whose members have been violently attacked by supporters of the PRI;
- urging the authorities to open an immediate and impartial investigation into the attacks, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Lic. José Murat Casab
Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca
Palacio de Gobierno
Bustamente s/n
Oaxaca 68000
Estado de Oaxaca
MEXICO
Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Oaxaca
Fax: +52 951 637 37
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Lic. Sergio Santibañez
Procurador del Estado de Oaxaca
Avenida Luis Echeverría
La Experimental
San Antonio de la Cal
Oaxaca 71236
Estado de Oaxaca
MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador del Estado, Oaxaca

Fax: +52 951 155 19

Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Attorney

Dr. Evencio Nicolas Martínez Ramírez
Presidente de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Estado de Oaxaca
Calle de los Derechos Humanos No. 210
Col. América
68050, Oaxaca, Oax.

Telegrams: Presidente, Commission Estatal Derechos Humanos, Oaxaca

Fax: +52 951 351 91

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Network of Oaxaca

Alicia Mesa

Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos

c/o Centro de Derechos Humanos 'Los Príncipes'

González Ortega No415, Oaxaca 68000

Oaxaca, MEXICO

Fax: +52 951 451 52 (If someone answers, say: "Me da el tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Estimada Sra Mesa / Dear Mrs Mesa

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 3 March 2000.