

via fax: 011 52 747 471 9801 Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo Governor of the State of Guerrero, Mexico	via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414 Lic. Francisco Javier Ramirez Acuna Minister of the Interior of Mexico
via fax: 011 52 747 471 9737 Gral. Juan H. Salinas Altes Public Security Minister of the State of Guerrero, Mexico	

November 16, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are gravely concerned for the safety of **Manuel Olivares Hernández**, Director of Guerrero State's "José María Morelos y Pavon" Regional Human Rights Center, and **15 members of Chilapa Citizens' Committee** (Consejo Ciudadano de Chilapa) who are being detained by police in the municipality of Chilapa, Guerrero State, charged with attacks on public roads, criminal association and rioting.

On November 7, approximately 50 members of the Chilapa Citizens' Committee staged a peaceful street protest to pressure municipal authorities for improvements of basic infrastructure and services, such as schools, roads, electricity and drinking water. On November 8, as the Committee supporters gathered to stage another protest, 30 municipal police in riot gear used excessive force to break up the demonstration, beating protesters with batons and firing teargas.

Manuel Olivares Hernández was acting as a human rights observer during the protest, documenting the beatings and arrests of the members of the Citizens' Committee, when a senior municipal official told police officers to "arrest that bastard who is causing us trouble." Manuel Olivares Hernández argued that he was carrying out legitimate activities in defense of human rights and was not participating in the protest. However, the official told him that he didn't care.

Manuel Olivares Hernández is a leading human rights defender in the region and has denounced the authorities' failure to ensure that marginalized local indigenous communities have access to basic services. We fear that he and the 15 protesters who were also detained are at risk of ill-treatment or torture and may face unfair judicial proceedings in reprisal for their protests.

Because of these concerns, we **strongly urge you to:**

- guarantee that Manuel Olivares Hernández and the 15 members of the Chilapa Citizens' Committee will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- order the immediate release of Manuel Olivares Hernández and others who have not used or advocated violence;
- conduct a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the beating and arrests carried out on November 8 by the Chilapa Municipal Preventive Police;
- uphold the detainees' rights to due legal process and fair judicial proceedings, including the presumption of innocence, the right to effective defense and the impartial evaluation of defense and prosecution evidence.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Centro de Derechos Humanos "José María Morelos y Pavon" ~ via US mail
Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana ~ via fax: 202 728 1698
Ambassador Antonio O. Garza, Jr ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5207-0091
William Duncan, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.5752
Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: (202)458-3992
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
US Reps. Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: