

via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414 <b>Lic. Francisco Javier Acuna</b> Minister of the Interior of Mexico	via fax: 011 52 951 511 5519 <b>Lic. Evencio Nicolas Martinez Ramirez</b> Attorney General of Oaxaca, Mexico
via fax: 011 52 951 502 0530 <b>Lic. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz</b> Governor of Oaxaca, Mexico	

January 31, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of **Lauro Juarez**, a Chatino indigenous community leader from the municipality of Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, Oaxaca State. He has been missing from the site of a roadside protest since December 30.

On December 26, 2007, approximately 1200 persons, including Lauro Juarez, other community leaders and inhabitants of the municipalities of Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, San Gabriel Mixtepec and Santos Reyes Nopala, started a demonstration along the road connecting Oaxaca City and Puerto Escondido. They were protesting against the State Electoral Institute's failure to endorse the municipal representatives in Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, who had been selected in accordance with the traditional indigenous system. The protesters also denounced a series of violent incidents and threats that took place in the electoral meetings in San Gabriel Mixtepec and Santos Reyes Nopala.

Because they feared retaliation from local police and groups of armed men, the protesters called off the demonstration on December 29 and started to return home. Lauro Juarez remained behind and was last seen early on December 30 sleeping in a house adjacent to the site of the protest. His suitcase was found at the site but he had disappeared. Later on December 30, a group of approximately 70 men armed with machetes and guns blocked the access road to Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, beating and intimidating passers-by and impeding the return home of the protesters. The disappearance of Lauro Juarez has been reported to the Office of the Oaxaca State Attorney General and the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights.

We are aware that community leaders who try to strengthen local indigenous rights have frequently been targets of threats, harassment and unfounded criminal charges, particularly by state and municipal authorities. We therefore **strongly urge you to**

- Promptly conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the fate and whereabouts of **Lauro Juarez**;
- Conduct an independent and impartial investigation into all reports of violence during the local elections in the municipalities of Santa Maria Temaxcaltepec, San Gabriel Mixtepec, and Santos Reyes Nopala;
- Ensure the safety of protesters and other recently elected local leaders who may be at risk of attack by illegal armed groups.

For Peace with Justice,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: Dr. Heriberto Antonio Garcia, President of the Oaxaca State Human Rights Commission ~ via fax: 011 52 951 503 0220  
Centro de Derechos Humanos y Asesoría a Pueblos Indígenas, human rights organization ~ via email  
Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, Mexico's Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 728 1698  
Ambassador Antonio O. Garza, Jr., US Ambassador to Mexico ~ 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 and US Representatives Latta, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA07/08 MEXICO

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

