

Via fax: 011 52 55 5346 0908 <b>Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza</b> Attorney General of the Republic of Mexico	011 52 747 471 9802 <b>Lic. Zerferino Torreblan a Galindo</b> Governor of State of Guerrero, Mexico
Via fax: 011 55 5557 5571 <b>Gral. Guillermo Galvan Galvan</b> Minister of National Defense of Mexico	

July 1, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the **residents of three villages in Coyuca de Catalan, Guerrero**: Las Palancas, Puerto de las Ollas and El Jilguero. Sixty army soldiers arrived on June 9, ostensibly to detain members of the Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army (ERPI). They fired into the air and shot at male villagers as they fled into the mountains to hide. More soldiers arrived the following day, bringing the total to around 500. They remained until June 13 when an observation mission arrived that consisted of human rights and other civil society organizations, including the Human Rights Commission of Guerrero (Coddehum).

In efforts to force information from residents about the ERPI, the soldiers harassed and tortured them. According to the observation mission, a 14-year-old boy, Omar García, was tortured for more than three hours: electric shocks, blindfolded, head covered with a plastic bag, beaten and threatened with castration. A 33-year-old man, Cesar Acosta Avila, who suffers the effects of a brain hemorrhage from two years ago, was tortured for three hours: soldiers stuck needles under his fingernails, punched his ears, covered his head with a plastic bag, beat him on the head and chest, threatened to give electric shocks to his nipples and threatened him with imprisonment if he reported what they had done.

Soldiers also abused women and children. They held knives to women's throats, pushed a pregnant woman against a wall and threatened to kill a woman with a baby. Soldiers threatened and interrogated several children, including an 8-year-old boy, at gunpoint. They raided houses, stole and damaged property and threatened to burn down the houses. They also attempted to fabricate evidence to link villagers to armed groups and drug trafficking.

These attacks are among an increasing number of incidents throughout Mexico implicating soldiers in unlawful killings, torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and illegal house searches. Because the military justice system retains jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute military personnel accused of human rights violations, we **strongly urge that you**

- order an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the reports of torture and harassment by soldiers against the residents of Las Palancas, Puerto de las Ollas and El Jilguero, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- ensure the safety of residents of the villages against future attacks, in accordance with their wishes.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Human Rights Commission of Guerrero ~ via US mail  
 Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 728 1698  
 Political Affairs Section, US Embassy in Mexico ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5207-0091  
 Mary Stickles, 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 Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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