

via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414 <b>Lic. Fernando Francisco Gomez-Mont</b> Minister of the Interior of Mexico	via fax: 011 52 961 616 5724 <b>Mtro. Raciél Lopez Salazar</b> Attorney General of the State of Chiapas, Mexico
via fax: 01152 961 639 6615 <b>Lic. Juan Carlos Moreno Guillen</b> President of the Human Rights Commission of the State of Chiapas, Mexico	

December 3, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Taskforce on Central America, continue to be extremely concerned for the safety of human rights lawyer **Ricardo Lagunes Gasca**, **Carmen Aguilar Gómez** and other **residents of Ejido Jotola village**, Chilon municipality, Chiapas State. On November 3, four men were arrested and charged with attempted murder, deprivation of liberty and causing injuries in a September attack on the persons named above. (See our letter of Sept 25, 2009). On November 11 a judge released them on bail, arguing that their offenses were not serious.

During the night the men arrived drunk back in Ejido Jotola and stood around outside the home of the mother of a man who provided a witness statement against them. Local women also reported that in the following days the men shouted at them saying that they would "kill [those sympathizing with the National Zapatista Liberation Army (EZLN)] one by one and will rape all the women."

According to community members, the attackers are part of the Organization for the Protection of Indigenous and Peasants' rights (OPDDIC), an illegal armed group that opposes EZLN sympathizers. On November 7, members of OPDDIC threatened to set fire to homes in Ejido Jotola in retaliation for the arrests of the four men.

This is a further example of attacks by groups opposed to the EZLN which has been militarily inactive for many years but continues to operate as a social and political movement in Chiapas. Failure of authorities to provide protection from opposing groups has left many communities in fear of further attacks.

We **strongly urge** you to:

- immediately provide protection for the inhabitants of Ejido Jotola, Chilon municipality, as well as to human rights defenders working in the area, in accordance with their wishes;
- ensure that adequate measures are taken to prevent the four men accused of the initial attack from threatening or attacking members of the community;
- begin a prompt and impartial inquiry into the new threats against villagers and investigate how the men awaiting trial were allowed to return to the community without any measures in place to prevent new acts of intimidation.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolome de las Casas, nongovernmental human rights organization ~ via email  
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US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email  
US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA 250/09Update/MEXICO

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