

via fax: 011 52 55 50 93 5321 Lic. Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa President of the Republic of Mexico	via fax: 011 52 55 5346 0908 Arturo Chavez Chavez Attorney General of Mexico
via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414 Lic. Fernando Francisco Gomez-Mont Minister of the Interior of Mexico	via fax: 011 52 951 502 0530 Lic. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz Governor of Oaxaca

May 12, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We remain deeply concerned regarding the continuing human rights abuses in Oaxaca. The indigenous Triqui community of San Juan Copala is surrounded by paramilitaries. Those trying to break the siege have been threatened, attacked or killed. We are outraged that government authorities have not taken action to end the siege.

In an effort to unite the Triqui peoples and to distance itself from the divisions of local political parties, the 700 indigenous Triqui inhabitants of San Juan Copala declared itself an autonomous indigenous municipality in 2007. Over the past several months, members of an armed group called Ubisort, with ties to the ruling PRI party, have blockaded the community. Ubisort broke the water pipe into the community, forcing residents to use a contaminated water source, and have prevented damaged electricity cables from being repaired. Only a few residents are allowed to fetch food on foot from the nearest town. All vehicles have been turned back since early April. Shots have been fired into the community from the surrounding hills. On April 17, San Juan Copala resident **José Celestino Hernández Cruz** was killed by Ubisort. Since then the siege intensified. Teachers and medical staff cannot enter the community, restricting access to education and health services.

On April 27, armed men opened fire on an international caravan of human rights observers trying to reach the Triqui community to document human rights abuses and provide humanitarian assistance. Observer **Jyri Antero Jaakola** from Finland and Oaxaca indigenous human rights defender **Beatriz Cariño**, director of the community group CACTUS, were killed in the attack. Several others were injured, including Monica Citali Santiago Ortiz, who was shot in the back. **Rubén Valencia Nuñez**, a member of VOCAL (Oaxacan Voices Constructing Autonomy and Freedom) was detained by paramilitaries who threatened him with death before turning him loose. Fearing for their lives, two journalists (**David Cilia** and **Erika Ramirez**), human rights activist **Fernando Santiago**, and VOCAL members **David Venegas** and **Noe Bautista** fled and hid for two days in the surrounding woodlands.

Based on the facts presented above, **we urge that you**

- take immediate action to protect the residents of San Juan Copala, and ensure that they have access to adequate supplies of food and water; as well as all necessary health care;
- end the siege of the community by the Ubisort armed group, so that residents can move freely, communicate with the outside world and receive visits from humanitarian missions without fear of attack or reprisal;
- investigate the death of Jose Celestino Hernández Cruz, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- prevent human rights abuses committed by members of Ubisort against local residents, and investigate the group's links to members of the PRI, and bring all those implicated in human rights abuses to justice.
- investigate the April 27 attack on the human rights observers, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- publicly condemn the attack and reinforce your commitment to the protection of human rights defenders in Mexico with prompt and effective action.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

CC: Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unidos (CACTUS) ~ via US mail
Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202-833-4320
Carlos Pascual, US Ambassador to Mexico ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5080-2834
Mary Stickles, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-5752
Dinah Shelton and José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202-458-3650
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email
UA 101/10update_Mexico

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