

via fax: 011 52 747 47 2 3125 Lic. Rene Juarez Cisneros, Governor of Guerrero, Mexico	via fax: 011 525 55 093 3414 Lic. Santiago Creel Minister of the Interior, Mexico
via fax: 011 52 747 47 22328 Lic. Jesus Ramirez Guerrero Attorney General of Guerrero	via fax: 011 52 55 55578963 Gral. Gerardo Clemente Ricardo Vega Garcia Minister of National Defense, Mexico

January 24, 2005

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety of Indigenous rights activist, ***Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, her family and Organización del Pueblo Indigena Tlapaneco, AC (OPIT)*** of which she is a member. She has documented human rights violations against indigenous communities in the state of Guerrero, particularly those committed by the military. Among these were the cases of two women from the Tlapaneca indigenous group, Valentina Rosendo Cantu and Ines Fernandez Ortega, who were raped by soldiers in 2002. She spoke out about the authorities' failure to properly investigate the rapes in a speech at a December 3-4 conference in Guerrero on indigenous rights.

On December 9, a letter was delivered to her house in the municipality of Ayutla de los Libres threatening her and her family, including two young daughters; it said "Soon you will rest in peace." On December 26, her sister, Andrea, saw two men taking notes close to Obtilia's house. On January 4 and 5, two men were seen taking photographs and watching the OPIT offices. Obtilia had suffered intimidation and death threats previously over the rape of the two indigenous women but had not reported them for fear of reprisals against her and her family.

The Mexican army carried out an investigation of the rapes in 2002 and dismissed the allegations. However, it is well-known that military investigations of human rights violations committed by military personnel lack impartiality. In Guerrero state, human rights defenders and community activists have frequently been the target of threats, smear campaigns and harassment by military patrols carrying out operations against drug producers and traffickers. Authorities rarely investigate such intimidating actions, leaving communities extremely vulnerable and unwilling to lodge complaints. The impunity for the rape of Ines Fernandez and Valentina Cantu has a direct impact on women and indigenous communities in Guerrero and the heavy military presence keeps them in fear.

Therefore, **we strongly urge that you**

- call for an impartial investigation, **in the civilian justice system**, into the rape by soldiers of Valentina Rosendo Cantu and Ines Fernandez Ortega;
- give protection to those at risk, in accordance with their wishes;
- call for an impartial, prompt and full investigation into the death threats and other acts of intimidation, and bring those responsible to justice.

For Peace with Justice,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Ambassador Carlos Alberto De Icaza Gonzalez, Embassy of Mexico ~ via fax: 1 202 728 1698
 Antonio O. Garza, Jr., U.S. Ambassador to Mexico ~ fax: 011 52 55 5511 9980
 William Duncan, Desk Officer for Mexico ~ fax: 202.647.9894
 U.S. Senator Voinovich & U.S. Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email, fax

UA 7/05 Mexico

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