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VIA FACSIMILE: 011 525 55 093 3414 Lic. Santiago Creel Minister of the Interior	

March 14, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged that on February 15 **police detained at least 49 people, beating many of them severely**, while evicting supporters of an opposition party in the town of Tila, Chiapas state. We are concerned for their safety.

Victory in the mayoral election had initially been claimed by a PRD-PT party alliance (Democratic Revolution Party and Workers Party). After a series of appeals, the Federal Electoral Council awarded the election to the long-standing dominant party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). In protest, supporters of the PRD-PT began occupying the town hall in January.

Tila was the base of the paramilitary group Paz y Justicia during the 1990s. The majority of its leaders were never brought to justice, and the group has not been dismantled. The failure of authorities to hold them responsible for human rights violations has created a climate of fear and impunity.

In light of these facts, we strongly urge you to

- Make public the identity of those in detention
- Ensure that those in detention are held in a legally recognized detention facility, and have unrestricted access to their families, lawyers and any medical attention they may require
- See that the detainees are charged with a recognizably criminal offense; otherwise, release them
- Conduct an immediate, full and impartial investigation into the police operation in Tila on February 15
- Conduct a full and impartial investigation of the activities of Paz y Justicia and any other armed civilian groups operating in the municipality
- See that armed civilian groups such as Paz y Justicia are dismantled and that their members are held accountable for human rights violations

As a consequence of your high position in Chiapas, you have the authority and the responsibility to put an end to human rights violations such as those detailed above. We urge you to do so.

For Peace with Justice,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

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U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via fax, email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via fax, email

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