

# IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America  
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via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414 <b>Lic. Francisco Javier Ramirez Acuna</b> Minister of the Interior, Mexico	via fax: 011 52 55 53 46 09 08 <b>Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza</b> Prosecutor General of the Republic, Mexico
Via fax: 011 52 951 502 0530 <b>Lic. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz</b> Governor of Oaxaca	Via fax: 52 951 511 5519 <b>Lic. Evencio Nicolas Martinez Ramirez</b> Attorney General of Oaxaca

April 25, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of political activist **David Venegas** of the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), and human rights lawyer **Isaac Torres Carmonas** of the Mexican League for the Defense of Human Rights. The two were in central Oaxaca at 1pm on April 13 when eight state police officers in uniform leapt from a vehicle without number plates, shouting "Don't move. . ." At gunpoint they forced David Venegas to the ground and kicked him. They threatened Isaac Torres Carmona and told him not to get involved if he didn't want to be taken also. They showed no arrest warrant and gave no reason for detaining David Venegas at the premises of the Oaxaca State Public Prosecutor's Office in central Oaxaca City.

When authorities released the information on his location and allowed him to speak to his family at 3am, David Venegas told them he had been beaten and threatened in an apparent attempt to force him to confess to possession of cocaine and heroin. He was taken to the Federal Attorney General's Office, where he was charged with the federal crime of possession of cocaine and heroin. Photos taken by the authorities and later published in the press show him standing with a bag of white powder and a copy of the APPO publication Barrikada held up in front of his bruised face.

We fear that David Venegas is at risk of further ill-treatment and unfair judicial proceedings because we are aware that, since a teachers' strike triggered a political crisis in Oaxaca in May 2006, political activists and human rights defenders carrying out legitimate human rights promotion work who were not responsible for criminal offenses have faced politically motivated arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and fabricated criminal charges.

In light of these facts, we strongly urge you to:

- begin an immediate, thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the arbitrary detention and reports of torture of David Venegas and bring to those responsible to justice;
- begin an impartial and independent evaluation of the evidence against David Venegas and drop all charges against him if it is found to be flawed.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

COPIES: Dr. Jose Luis Soberanes Fernandez, President of the National Human Rights Commission ~ via US mail  
Mexican League for the Defense of Human Rights ~ via fax: 011 52 55 5399 1336  
Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana ~ via fax: 202 728 1698  
Ambassador Antonio O. Garza, Jr ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5207-0091  
William Duncan, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.5752  
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US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Reps Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 92/07 MEXICO

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