

via fax: 011 52 747 47 14788 Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo Governor of Guerrero, Mexico	via fax: 011 52 55 51 28 02 34 Maestro Ricardo Sepulveda Director of Human Rights, Interior Ministry of Mexico
via fax: 011 52 747 47 22328 Lic. Jesus Ramirez Guerrero Attorney General of Guerrero, Mexico	

October 1, 2005

We welcome the September 15 decision of the Guerrero State court to acquit **Felipe Arreaga Sánchez**, environmental activist and prisoner of conscience. He had been falsely accused of the 1998 murder of the son of a local political boss and spent more than 10 months in prison. We also applaud the defense efforts of "Tlachinollan" La Montaña Human Rights Centre, and the national and international pressure which contributed to his release. Strong evidence demonstrated that the case against Felipe Arreaga was fabricated as a reprisal for his leading role in protests against excessive and illegal logging of forests in Petatlan, Guerrero State.

Although we are glad for his release, we fear that Felipe Arreaga, his family and other **environmental activists in the region remain in grave danger and could face attack** as he continues his work of defending the environment. During his trial, one of the men responsible for the prosecution threatened reprisals against Felipe Arreaga and his family if Arreaga were acquitted.

We also continue to be concerned about the thirteen other former leaders of the Organización Campesina Ecologista de la Sierra de Petatlan (OCESP) who still face arrest warrants in connection with the same case. In particular, we seek information on the investigation into the attack against environmental activist Albertano Penalosa and his family in May. We wrote you on June 12 after two of his sons were killed; Albertano and another son were seriously wounded. We believe that the attacks and arrest warrants are meant to deter environmental activism in the region. We again remind you that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, including environmentalist activists, and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

We strongly urge that you

- guarantee the safety of Felipe Arreaga Sánchez, his family and other environmental activists from the Petatlan region in Guerrero State;
- ensure that Felipe Arreaga receives adequate compensation for his false imprisonment for 10 months;
- investigate his prosecution, which was based on fabricated evidence, and cancel the arrest warrants in the same case against 13 other former leaders of the Organización Campesina Ecologista de la Sierra de Petatlan (OCESP);
- conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the attack against Albertano Penalosa and his family and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

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
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Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña "Tlachinollan" AC. via email: tlachinollan_internacional@yahoo.com.mx
Juan Alarcon Hemández, President of the Guerrero Human Rights Commission ~ via fax: : 011 52 747 47 121 90/10251
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich and U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA Update50/05 Mexico

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