



InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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December 14, 2004

Dear Sir or Madam:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of the members of the Zapotec indigenous communities of Loxicha, Oaxaca State, and members of local indigenous organizations such as the Union de los Pueblos contra la Represion y la Militarizacion de la region de Loxicha (UPCRMRL). On November 7, **Leoncio Luna Antonio** was shot and killed in the Zapotec community of Santa Cruz. He had received death threats because he had been campaigning for a coalition of opposition political parties. His killers have been linked to a local cacique (political boss) who is allied to the PRI, the governing party in the state. This was not an isolated incident. Leoncio Luna Antonio was the fifth Zapotec person killed in political violence in 2004, and over the past decade, at least 40 members of the community have been killed in political violence.

Lino Antonio Almaraz, an indigenous rights campaigner, was shot and killed on September 30. Gunmen associated with the local caciques are still in the community intimidating local people. We find it most disturbing that local non-governmental organizations cannot get into indigenous communities in the Loxicha region to document the killings, threats and intimidation taking place there. Because of this, the state authorities have been able to ignore the political nature of the violence. This situation is totally unacceptable.

In light of the facts presented, we strongly urge you to

- Take immediate steps to ensure the protection of the Zapotec communities of Loxicha
- Guarantee the safety of members of organizations such as the UPCMRL and others working to promote indigenous rights in the region
- Conduct prompt, impartial and full investigations into the murders of Lino Antonio Almaraz and Leoncio Luna Antonio, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice

The violence perpetrated against indigenous peoples in your country must end. As a consequence of your high position in Mexico, you have the authority and the responsibility to put an end to incidents such as those detailed above. We urge you to do so.

For Peace with Justice,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

- cc: Union de Pueblos contra la repression y militarizacion de la Region de Loxicha (UPCRMRL) ~ via mail
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The following people hereby urge that you take action on this matter as indicated in this letter.