

via fax: 011 52 961 61 657 24 <b>Lic. Mariano Herran Salvatti</b> Attorney General of Chiapas, Mexico	via fax: 011 525 55 346 0908 <b>Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza</b> Federal Attorney General of Mexico
via fax: 011 52 961 618 8050 ext 21122 <b>Lic. Juan Jose Sabines Guerrero</b> Governor of Chiapas, Mexico	

September 3, 2007

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety and well-being of six Lacondona indigenous families from the settlements of Nuevo San Manuel and Buen Samaritano in the Montes Azules nature reserve, Chiapas State. In the early morning of August 18, 39 people – six men, seven women and 26 children – were forcibly evicted from their homes in these settlements. Even though they have legal title to the land, the evicted families were given no notification of any legal complaint against them nor of their eviction. Federal and state police arrived at both settlements simultaneously and forced them into waiting helicopters. They were not given time to pack any possessions; their houses, crops and belongings were all destroyed.

To our knowledge, the men are being held in a prison in Tuxtla Gutierrez, charged with damage to private property, ecological damage, illegal occupation, criminal association and carrying fire arms. The women and children remain in police custody in a state-owned building with no drainage or sanitation or protection from exposure to the elements. The food they have been given is unacceptable to their culture. They have not had access to medical care, even though one person is thought to have either chickenpox or measles which could be a grave risk to the two pregnant women. The authorities have not consulted the evicted men or women about their relocation, and have announced that five other communities settled in the Montes Azules nature reserve would be evicted soon.

Although the Lacandona community was given a legal title to the land in the area in 1972, many other indigenous communities living on the land for many years were not acknowledged or given anything. Following a 2005 agreement, the federal and Chiapas State governments committed to regularize the land rights of 28 communities, but their failure to do so has resulted in much violence. We wrote to you on Nov. 23, 2006 about the killing on Nov. 13 of six people in one of the communities and disappearance of two others who are still missing. We remind you that, under international law, forced evictions (evictions carried out without consultations, due process of law and assurances of adequate alternative accommodation) are a grave violations of human rights.

**Based on the facts presented above, we strongly urge that you**

- charge or release all the evicted people and ensure the right to fair trial and due process to all, including the six detained men;
- give all the detainees immediate access to all necessary medical care;
- suspend all evictions from Montes Azules until those in authority are assured that such evictions will be in conformity with international human rights law and standards ;
- ensure, in consultation with those affected, that all evictees have adequate alternative accommodation and access to food, drinking water and sanitation

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

Copies: Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolome de las Casas A.C. ~ via US mail  
 Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, 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. Senators DeWine and Voinovich and U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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

