

via fax: 011 52 747 471 9956 Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo Governor of the State of Guerrero, Mexico	via fax: 011 52 55 53 46 09 08 Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza Attorney General of the Republic of Mexico
via fax: 011 52 747 494 2981 Lic. Eduardo Murueta Urrutia Attorney General of the State of Guerrero, Mexico	

March 3, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **Rafael Rodríguez Dircio**, a member of OPIM (Me'phaa [Tlapanecas] Indigenous People's Organization), who was threatened with death on February 4 by a supporter of the local *cacique* (political boss) in the community of El Camalote, Guerrero State. The man, who had a gun, approached Rafael Rodríguez saying, "I am going to kill you... Human rights aren't worth anything. You aren't worth anything."

Rafael Rodríguez is one of 15 OPIM members who have been accused of the January 1, 2008 killing of Alejandro Feliciano García whom OPIM claim was one of the *cacique's* supporters. On December 2, 2008, we wrote to Mexican officials expressing our concern about the continued imprisonment in Ayutla prison, Guerrero State, of five of these members: **Manuel Cruz, Orlando Manzanarez, Natalio Ortega, Romualdo Santiago and Raul Hernandez**. They are being detained solely for their peaceful opposition to the *cacique* while defending the rights of members of their indigenous community. According to their families, since the men have been detained, their children have been stigmatized and discriminated against in their school by the head teacher, who the families say is one of the *cacique's* supporters. Other students have called them "sons and daughters of criminals."

On January 24, OPIM founder member **Obtilia Eugenio Manuel** was followed by a van with tinted windows. A few days before, she had been followed to an OPIM meeting by three vans; in the third van she recognized a man who had been continually harassing her and whom she had already reported to the authorities. Another man in the third van shouted to her: "Do you think you're so brave? Are you a real woman? Let's hope you also go to prison... If you don't go to prison, we'll kill you."

These threats are part of a concerted pattern of harassment and intimidation of members of OPIM, founded in 2002, in reprisal for their legitimate work defending human rights. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has responded by asking the Mexican government to provide protection to over 100 members of the organization, including Rafael Rodríguez Dircio, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel and the others named above.

Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- immediately and unconditionally release the five OPIM members named above who are still detained in Ayutla prison;
- order an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the recent threats and acts of harassment against Rafael Rodríguez Dircio and Obtilia Eugenio Manuel;
- ensure that the children of the five OPIM members in Ayutla prison can attend school without fear of discrimination or stigmatization;
- ensure that the 100 OPIM members named by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights receive all the protection that the Commission has requested for them.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montana "Tlachinollan" AC ~ via US mail
 Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 728 1698
 Antonio O. Garza, Jr., US Ambassador to Mexico ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5207-0091
 Mary Stickle, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.5752
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ fax: (202)458-3992
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Boccheri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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