

via FAX: 011 52 95 1501 8100 ext 40058
Lic. Gabino Cué Monteagudo
Governor of Oaxaca, Mexico

via FAX: 011 52 55 5093 3414
Sr. Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong
Minister of the Interior of Mexico

March 1, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are very disturbed at the harassment of **two indigenous women** who were key eyewitnesses in 2010 to the killing of Bety Cariño Trujillo and Jyri Jaakkola, two human rights defenders in the remote Triqui Indigenous community of San Juan Copala in Oaxaca State.

On January 22 relatives of a man who has been arrested in connection with the murders confronted the two women (whose names are withheld for security reasons) in their home town of El Carrizal in Oaxaca State and told them to retract their previous written testimonies. They are soon due to give oral testimonies in court.

Both witnesses have since left El Carrizal. On February 3 and 4 the same people came to their home and told their relative that "something bad can happen" if the women do not retract their testimonies. To this date, state authorities have provided insufficient security measures for the women.

On April 27 2010, men belonging to an armed group, reportedly linked to state and municipal authorities, killed Mexican human rights defender Bety Cariño Trujillo and Finnish human rights observer Jyri Antero Jaakkola. Both activists were part of a humanitarian convoy that was trying to deliver food and medicine and to document the human rights situation in Triqui which had been under siege by the armed group for several months (cf our letters of May 12, 2010, June 1, 2010 and September 15, 2010).

In 2012 arrest warrants were issued against an armed gang in connection with both killings. The armed gang has apparent links to municipal and state authorities. Eleven of those accused remain at large because state and federal authorities have consistently failed to carry out the arrest warrants due to fear of retaliation from the gang.

The rule of law is largely absent in the Triqui region, leaving much of the population vulnerable to attack and subject to the control of armed groups. The current state government has promised to address the problems affecting the region, but little change can be seen.

Because we believe the people of the Triqui indigenous community are at risk, we **strongly urge** that you

- provide effective and comprehensive protection for the two eyewitnesses described above and for all witnesses in the case, in strict accordance with their wishes, and in full compliance with local legislation on witness protection;
- carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the harassment of eyewitnesses, and bring those responsible to justice;
- carry out a full investigation into the killing of Bety Cariño Trujillo and Jyri Jaakkola, as well as the killing of many other people from San Juan Copala in the last few years, including the apparent links between armed gangs and municipal and state authorities, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies MAIZ: Movimiento Agrario Indígena Zapatista ~ via email
Mexican Commission for Defense and Promotion of Human Rights ~ via email
Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 728 1698
Earl Anthony Wayne, US Ambassador to Mexico ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5080-2834
Chris Andino, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via email: andinoc@state.gov
James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Mexico, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3650
Tracy Robinson, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
US Senators Brown & Portman, US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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