

via fax: 011 52 55 52 77 23 76 or 011 52 55 5510 3717 Estimado Señor Presidente Enrique Peña Nieto President of Mexico	via email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx Estimada Señora Procuradora Arely Gómez González Attorney General of Mexico
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November 25, 2015

Dear President and Attorney General:

We urge you to take immediate action to investigate and respond to the unlawful detention and retaliatory criminal charges brought against **Juan Carlos Orozco Matus, Othón Nazariéga Segura, Efraín Picaso Pérez** and **Roberto Abel Jiménez García**, members of Section 22 of the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE). Section 22, a teachers' union, has been actively involved in human rights work since 1980. They have organized several marches and demonstrations in different parts of Mexico protesting the educational reform approved in 2013 because it was passed without prior consultation. Section 22 is also active in support of political prisoners.

On October 28, the four teachers and labor organizers were detained in Oaxaca. Jiménez García was detained by plain-clothes armed officers who did not wear any identification number. Picaso Pérez was taken while travelling in a private vehicle, which indicates he was being followed. The security forces, who refused to show their arrest warrant, took the men from Oaxaca to Mexico City to be presented before the federal prosecutor. As of earlier this month, they were being held at Almoloya Prison, a maximum security prison near Mexico City, while federal courts based in Oaxaca are investigating their cases. Following detention and in violation of legal procedure, they were held without communication with their lawyers and without access to medical treatment.

The men are facing charges of aggravated robbery, riot, damage to property, and peaceful demonstrations that occurred in July 2014, August 2014 and June 2015 in different locations throughout Oaxaca. If convicted, they face up to 40 years imprisonment. Their legal representatives have filed a complaint before the National Human Rights Commission.

This incident is an example of the increased misuse of the penal system in order to criminalize the defense of human rights. The indiscriminate use of preventive detention and charging human rights defenders with vague and ambiguous crimes are inhibiting freedom of association, including lawful organized social protest. We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- immediately release Juan Carlos Orozco Matus, Othón Nazariéga Segura, Efraín Picaso Pérez and Roberto Abel Jiménez García because evidence strongly suggests that their detention and criminal charges are a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defense of labor rights;
- guarantee their physical and psychological security and that of their colleagues in Section 22-SNTE;
- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the arrests and the veracity of the charges, in accordance with international standards;
- guarantee that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai and Christine Stonebraker-Martínez
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Lic. Gabino Cué Monteagudo, Gobernador de Oaxaca ~ via fax 011 52 95 1501 8100 ext40068
 Dr. Miguel Basáñez Ebergenyi, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 833 4320
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 James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Mexico, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3650
 Paulo Vannuchi, Rapporteur for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3650
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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

