

via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414 <b>Lic. Fernando Francisco Gomez-Mont</b> Minister of the Interior of Mexico	via fax: 011 52 951 5115 519 <b>Lic. Evencio Nicolas Ramirez</b> Attorney General of Oaxaca, Mexico	via fax: 011 52 951 5020 800 <b>Lic. Javier Rueda Velazquez</b> Public Security Minister of Oaxaca, Mexico
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November 2, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, fear for the safety of the **villagers of Santo Domingo Ixcatlan**, Oaxaca state. On October 11, 100 men armed with guns, machetes and sticks attacked six state police officers sent to protect the villagers. They slashed one of them with a machete. After the police fled the scene the armed men set up barricades on all roads into the village, leaving the villagers trapped and without protection. Among the villagers trapped is human rights defender **Maria de la Luz Martínez**, who works for the Center for Human Rights and Advice for Indigenous People (CEDHAPI). The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ordered the Mexican authorities in 2008 to provide protection for the villagers and members of CEDHAPI. However, the authorities have not sent enough police officers to provide protection.

The group of armed men work for a local political boss (*cacique*) closely connected to the municipal authorities. Since early 2008, they have been threatening and intimidating members of the community who oppose the sale of community lands. The land sale would bring profit to the municipal authorities and to the *cacique*.

In April 2008, three community members opposed to the sale were killed in the village. In December 2008, the same group of armed men besieged the village and threatened to kill the inhabitants. In May 2009, Maria de la Luz Martínez was threatened with death by relatives of the *cacique*. The *cacique* was arrested in May for the killing of the three men, but others accused of involvement in the killings and now believed to be among the armed men are still at large, although there are open warrants for their arrest (cf our letters of May 25, 2008 and Jan. 13, 2009).

Because of our ongoing concern for indigenous communities trying to defend their lands and the failure of authorities to provide essential services to them, we **strongly urge you to**

- provide effective protection to the community of Santo Domingo Ixcatlan, and reopen safe routes into the village;
- order a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the activities of the armed group who are intimidating the inhabitants of Santo Domingo Ixcatlan, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- immediately arrest those still sought for the April 2008 killings.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: CEDHAPI ~ via email  
Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 728 1698  
Carlos Pascual, US Ambassador to Mexico ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5080-2834  
Mary Stickles, 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 Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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