



Mexico: Sierra Madre Appeal

The Consejo Asesor Sierra Madre (CASMAC) and Indigenous communities throughout the Chihuahua Mountains have requested urgent international support to their demands for peace and justice in multiple assassinations and other brutal abuses of Indigenous Tarahumara, Tepehuan, and environmental leaders in northern Mexico's Sierra Madre mountain range.

In a letter to Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, CASMAC describes increased violence against Indigenous leaders and environmentalists in the Sierra Madre of Chihuahua. Drug traffickers working with local *caciques* (political bosses) are reportedly responsible for many assassinations, beatings and other acts of violence. State authorities have reportedly refused to investigate the majority of these cases and federal investigations have been hindered by diversion of resources to other priorities and by corruption in the judicial system. According to the federal attorney general, one of the most violent *caciques*, Artemio Fontes, was granted

an indefinite "amparo" (or immunity from prosecution) in September by Federal Justice Avelina Morales Guzman of the third district, Chihuahua, despite sixty-three outstanding federal and state indictments. Documents obtained from the attorney general's office and former National Indigenista Institute employees indicate that no less than thirty seven people have been killed by Fontes' associates over the past three years.

For more information, contact: Randall Gingrich, Forest Guardians, Sierra Madre Program Director Tel/FAX: (602)-326-2511, email: sol3az@igc.apc.org.

Nicaragua: Recontras Massacre Miskitus

At least 20 Miskitu Indians were killed in Nov. when 100 recontras attacked the villages of Nueva Esperanza and Kantawas in the area of San Andres de Bocay. The recontras may be part of a group that broke away from the Frente Norte 3-80, the last recontra group to disarm.

Army Capt. Milton Sandoval said the recontras were most likely looking for boots or food. Sandoval said several hundred army troops had been deployed, but could not reach the area because of lack of roads and heavy rains.

From: Weekly News Update on the Americas.

Colombia: Indigenous Leader Disappeared

Armed men abducted Indigenous leader Gerardo Estrada from his home in the Tuquerres municipality Narino department on Dec. 5. His whereabouts are not known and there is serious concern for his safety, especially as Indigenous leaders abducted under similar circumstances have often been killed.

At one a.m. on Dec. 5, a group of masked, armed men forced their way into Gerardo Estrada's house and forcibly abducted him. Despite all attempts to locate him, his whereabouts remain unknown. His "disappearance" has been denounced to the National Human Rights Ombudsman's office and to the Interior Minister, and a writ of *habeas corpus* was presented on his behalf.

Gerardo Estrada is a member of the governing committee of the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia movement, and had recently been elected to the department's municipal assembly. In common with other Indian communities, the Indians in the Pasto region are working to recover their traditional lands. In the process, they have come into conflict with local landowners who, with the cooperation of military and paramilitary forces, have committed human rights violations against them. In May, the body of regional Indigenous leader, Laureano Inampue was found two days after his abduction by men who stated that they were sent by the local military commander.

Please send letters or faxes expressing concern for the safety of Indigenous leader Gerardo Estrada and urging that all possible measures be taken to protect the lives of Indigenous leaders in the context of recent killings, to:

Senor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano, Presidente de la Republica, Palacio de Nariño, Santafe de Bogota, Colombia. Fax: 011 57 1 286 7434/287 7939.

With copies to: Ambassador Gabriel Silva, Embassy of Colombia, 2118 Leroy Pl. NW, Washington, DC 20008, and: CINEP, AA 25916, Bogota, Colombia.

From the Urgent Action Program Office.