

28 April 2010

**Re: Armed attack on peaceful human rights group and killing of human rights defender Beatriz Alberta (Bety) Cariño Trujillo and international observer Tyri Antero Jaakkola**

Front Line has received information from our contacts in Oaxaca about a violent attack on a peaceful solidarity caravan of human rights defenders yesterday, 27 April 2010, as it tried to enter the autonomous indigenous municipality of San Juan Copala. It has been confirmed that at least two human rights defenders have been killed and others remain unaccounted for.

On 27 April 2010, at approximately 14:40, a humanitarian group made up of 30 human rights defenders as well as international observers were on their way to attempt to enter San Juan Copala in order to deliver provisions to indigenous communities who have been under siege by armed groups. As they entered the community of La Sabana, a town reportedly controlled by paramilitary organisation *Unión de Bienestar Social de la Región Triqui* UBISORT (Social Welfare Union of the Triqui Region), their vehicles came under fire. **Beatriz Alberta (Bety) Cariño Trujillo**, of the *Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unidos* CACTUS (Centre for Community Support Working Together), and **Tyri Antero Jaakkola**, international observer from Finland, were both killed in the attack. **Noe Bautista Jimenez, David Venegas Reyes** and **Daniel Arellano Chavez**, all members of *Voces Oaxaqueñas Construyendo Autonomía y Libertad* VOCAL (Voices from Oaxaca for Autonomy and Liberty) remain missing. The three human rights defenders escaped when the attack broke out and it remains unknown whether they were captured by paramilitaries or whether they are in hiding.

One member of the group, **Mónica Citlali Santiago Ortiz**, was injured in the attack but was able to get to a hospital for medical attention. Those who did not escape and who remained in the vehicles were interrogated by the paramilitaries. Some have reported receiving death threats prior to being released.

UBISORT paramilitaries have reportedly sealed off the area and are refusing entry or exit to anyone, including medical teams and ambulances. There are further reports that the State Police of Oaxaca have refused to enter the area to assist locating those members of the peaceful movement who have not yet been accounted for.

The human rights organisations were attempting to enter San Juan Copala to provide support to the local community who have been without electricity, water, medical access and basic provisions as a result of the ongoing paramilitary blockade. Schools have also been shut down since January 2010. The caravan of observers included individuals from Finland, Italy, Belgium and Germany, members of the CACTUS, VOCAL, *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* APPO (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca), the *Red de Radios y Comunicadores Indígenas del Sureste Mexicano* (Network of Indigenous Radio Stations and Broadcasters of the Southeast of Mexico), as well as a group of teachers from the municipality who have been unable to give classes.

Front Line is gravely concerned by reports of this violent attack on peaceful human rights defenders and the killing of Beatriz Alberta Cariño Trujillo and Tyri Antero Jaakkola. Front Line remains extremely concerned for the physical and psychological integrity of all of the Mexican human rights defenders who make up the group, in particular those whose whereabouts remain unknown, as well as international observers accompanying the solidarity campaign. The violent

attack is directly linked to the peaceful activities of those national and international individuals as they attempted to defend the rights of the local communities affected in areas controlled by paramilitary groups.

**Front Line calls on you to urge the Mexican authorities to:**

1. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of human rights defenders in Oaxaca, particularly by ensuring that adequate and effective security measures are provided to those who remain in the area of the attack and that they are granted immediate access to medical attention;
2. Ensure that state police in Oaxaca are immediately dispatched to the region where the attack took place and carry out an immediate, impartial and thorough investigation into the armed attack on the human rights solidarity caravan and the reports of the killing of human rights defenders including Beatriz Alberta Cariño Trujillo, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Oaxaca, carrying out their legitimate work in the defence of human rights, are able to operate free of restrictions and reprisals.

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