



## INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL

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Mr. Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions;  
Mme. Margaret Sekaggya, Special Representative of the Secretary General on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders;  
Mr. A. James Anaya, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People

BY E-MAIL: [urgent-action@ohchr.org](mailto:urgent-action@ohchr.org)

**RE: Communication on the murder of Miguel Ángel Pérez Casales, indigenous and peasant leader [Translation of the original in the Spanish language]**

Dear Rapporteurs and Special Representative,

The indigenous and peasant organization Unidad de la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina (UFIC) and its National Executive Committee, along with the International Indian Treaty Council with which the UFIC is affiliated, denounce the aggression and despicable murder of Miguel Pérez Casales, municipal leader of the UFIC in Tepoztlán, State of Morelos, Mexico. This indigenous peasant leader was murdered on Saturday, October 31, 2009.

According to information received from the UFIC and other sources, Mr. Pérez Canales, 50 years of age, was a community member of the indigenous pueblo of Santa Catarina, municipality of Tepoztlán, State of Morelos, Mexico. His address was Calle 12 Este, Manzana 234, Lote 2, Colonia Tepecolala, Civac. According to versions provided by his family, on the morning of October 31, he left his home in the pueblo of Santa Catarina, Municipality of Tepoztlán, State of Morelos, to prepare an ironworking estimate. Miguel Pérez was an ironworker by trade. He never returned home.

This murder was made known shortly after 10 a.m., when the District Attorney's Office received the report from residents of the area, who reported the murder of one of the members of the 13 pueblos. His body was abandoned in a vacant lot in the town of Ahuatepec, north of Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. He had a coup de grâce to the nape of his neck and had been brutally beaten. A sign was also found at the scene containing the following message: "He was a rat, for selling the same land twice."

The incident took place in the Paraíso Montessori neighborhood of the above-mentioned town. Four 38 super caliber shells were found at the scene. According to reports from the State Attorney General's Office, the peasant leader's semi-naked body was abandoned to the side of his grey Nissan pickup truck, which had a Morelos license plate. The truck was marked with an identical message.

His family, along with civil associations, environmental advocates, and the local office of the Secretariat on Agrarian Reform, denied any connection between the victim and fraudulent marketing of lands, as alleged in the message found a few meters from his body, which had been rifled with bullets from a 38 super caliber weapon.

According to Juliana Quintanilla García, spokesperson for the Independent Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Independiente de Derechos Humanos – CIDH*), the victim, as well as his father—murdered in 1997— were leaders of a struggle to preserve water and forests in the area of El Texcal prior to its settlement by encroachers. (On June 27, 1992, Inocencio Pérez was murdered. Inocencio was a social leader and community member of Santa Catarina, and the father of Miguel Ángel Pérez Casales. His spilt blood was the great price paid by that indigenous community in defense of the ecological zone of Texcal.)

Mr. Miguel Pérez Casales was a leader of the Council of Pueblos of Morelos and of the Unidad de la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina (UFIC) for the Municipality of Tepoztlán, Morelos, and a tireless defender of the lands of his pueblo, Santa Catarina. Recently, with the pueblo's participation and agrarian leadership, and with support from the Council of Pueblos of Morelos, the longstanding land dispute was settled between the communities of Tejalpa and Santa Catarina.

Miguel Ángel Pérez Casales actively participated in the struggle of the 13 Pueblos of Morelos, originally formed to defend the Chihuahueta spring, which supplies water to the indigenous community of Xoxocotla, among other communities.

As other communities and organizations joined the movement to form what is now known as the Council of Pueblos, just two years ago in 2007, Miguel Angel Pérez Casales never waived in his support of the continuing struggles to defend the natural resources of the communities of the State of Morelos. In addition, since the founding of the Council of Pueblos of Morelos in 2007, he actively participated, joining the struggle of the 13 Pueblos in defense of water, air, and land, to stop construction of residences in the vicinity of the springs of Morelos.

Miguel Angel Pérez Casales never forgot his indigenous roots and at public ceremonies of the Council of Pueblos, he generally introduced himself with a greeting in Náhuatl. This was done at the first Congress of the Pueblos, in Xoxocotla, in August 2007; then again at the El Texcal Ecological Reserve, during the second Congress of the Pueblos, in August 2008; and at the presentation of the film "13 Pueblos, in Defense of Water, Air, and Earth" of filmmaker Francesco Taboada.

Last year, along with his pueblo, and other community members of the zone of Tejalpa, won a great victory: demarcation of the lands of Santa Catarina and Tejalpa. Santa Catarina was granted

a territory of 967 hectares, including the locations known as Acolapa, Milpillas and La Puerta, in exchange for a payment to Tejalpa of 34 million pesos. This conflict had persisted for 65 years, and the communities themselves resolved it through dialogue and negotiation.

After resolving the land boundary conflict, Miguel Ángel's next step was to recover El Texcal from encroachers who had usurped 350 hectares.

Now, everyone who signed the agreement on the demarcation of the Lands of Santa Catarina, municipality of Tepoztlán, and Tejalpa, municipality of Jiutepec, the boards of directors of the Community Members of Santa Catarina and Tejalpa in their entirety, received death threats, the first of which has been carried out.

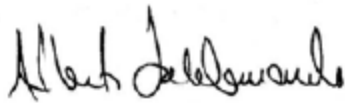
We call upon the Special Rapporteurs on arbitrary executions and on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary General on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders to carry out their mandates, so that these crimes will be investigated, the perpetrators will be duly punished, and all those who have been threatened will be protected.

We make an urgent call for protection of the entire board of directors of the Community Members of Santa Catarina against the threats they have received. As soon as we have all their names and addresses, we will send them to you.

We also call for an urgent visit to the site of these crimes and human rights violations.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Alberto Saldamando, Legal Counsel,  
International Indian Treaty Council

cc: COUNCIL OF PUEBLOS Saúl Roque  
UFIC – Florencio Ixpango, Isabel Quevedo, Saul Vicente  
IITC – Andrea Carmen, Executive Director