
[Mexico: International appeal for the release of Montiel and Cabrera](#)

Mexico was urged in an international declaration released on 27 November in Wellington, New Zealand, immediately to release tortured farmer environmentalists, Rodolfo Montiel Flores and Teodoro Cabrera Garcia who have been imprisoned after conviction on trumped up charges following their peaceful opposition to logging in the Mexican state of Guerrero (see WRM bulletins 26, 35 and 38).

The Tapu Te Ranga declaration was issued at the close of a 3 day international meeting on forests and forest protection. A copy was presented to the Mexican Embassy in Wellington and to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark, who was asked to assist the international campaign for the release of Montiel and Cabrera. She expressed her concern and said that New Zealand would take the matter up with the Mexican representatives this week.

The declaration, the original of which is to be sent to President Vicente Fox and other Mexican authorities, is designed to help the environmentalists and to pressure Mexico to stop the logging in Guerrero where 40% of the forests have been stripped away in the last eight years. The loggers include Boise Cascade, a US company.

Montiel and Cabrera were detained for opposing logging on land made available for logging to local landowners who in turn make deals with huge timber companies. Corruption is endemic and seems to involve politically powerful landowners, the army, paramilitary groups, the police and the timber companies.

The Declaration also calls for an end to the harassment of Montiel and Cabrera's colleague environmentalist farmers in the Organizacion de Campesinos Ecologistas de la Sierra de Petatlan y Coyuca de Catalan. In late October urgent appeals were issued to help group members who are reportedly facing death threats from soldiers and paramilitary groups. Amnesty International has adopted Montiel and Cabrera as prisoners of conscience and is now also very concerned about their colleagues too.

The two prisoners were tortured in detention prior to processing and in jail. The medical evidence, though documented by an independent Dutch human rights organisation was not admitted to the trial. They were charged and convicted on offences including having firearms and drugs but they have said that these were planted and "confessions" were extracted under torture. More recently the prison chief was overheard to say that he wanted to hire other prisoners to beat up the environmentalists.

The declaration, signed by more than sixty representatives from around the world calls on the Mexican Government and President Vicente Fox immediately:

1. To release Rodolfo Montiel Flores and Teodoro Cabrera from jail;
2. To prevent the harassment of environmentalists;
3. To end the logging of old growth forests in Guerrero and all other regions of Mexico.

