



Human Rights Observer

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Committee Releases Report on Mexico *The Homicide of Dr. Victor Manuel Oropeza Contreras*

On December 4, 1991, the MLC released a report documenting the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr. Victor Manuel Oropeza and critiquing the subsequent homicide investigation by Mexican authorities. The report, the Committee's second concerning Mexico, is titled *The Homicide of Dr. Victor Manuel Oropeza Contreras: a Case Study of Failed Human Rights Reforms in Mexico*.

Oropeza was found stabbed to death in his office early in the morning on 4 July 1991. He was a homeopathic physician by trade and also a well-known politician and journalist who vocally criticized the abuses committed by police and other government agents. The case generated considerable interest in the international human rights community as much for the stature of the victim as for the much-criticized manner in which Mexican authorities conducted the investigation.

Local human rights groups characterized the murder as a political assassination. The homicide investigation, led by the Federal Attorney General's office, generated numerous allegations of illegal detention, torture, coerced confessions, and claims that police and prosecutors had "manufactured" defendants. Two young men remain incarcerated for the crime as they await trial. Human rights observers seriously doubt their culpability.

Before publication of the report, the MLC sent Board Member Jim Dorsey to Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, to investigate the murder and the homicide investigation. During his stay, on September 1-4, Dorsey visited the two incarcerated defendants

and their families, interviewed the judge presiding over the case, met with members of the victim's family, and spoke with the new local Commander of the Federal Judicial Police. Although state police agents refused to meet with Dorsey, he was able to inspect the crime scene, which family members had preserved.

Dorsey was unable to interview federal agents who had participated in the case about the investigation because all those agents had been reassigned to other parts of the country. The special prosecutor who headed the investigation was promoted to Delegate of the Federal Attorney General to the state of Nayarit, for having quickly resolved the case. The promotion caused further controversy and precipitated the resignation of Teresa Jardí, the human rights lawyer hired as advisor by Mexico's Attorney General Morales Lechuga.

(Mexico Report, Continued Page Seven)

Delegation Visits Albania



Executive Director Barbara Frey and Ramsey County Attorney Tom Foley pose with Maksim Haxhia, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Tirane, at the National Monument in Tirane, Albania. Story Page Three. Photos Peggy Hicks.

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