



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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20 March 2003

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Mexico: The assassination of María de los Angeles Tamés of the National Action Party (PAN) in the town of Atizapán de Zaragoza, including whether she was investigating corruption in the town at the time of her death, whether her death was investigated, and if so, the results of the investigation (September 2001 - March 2003)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Several sources reported that María de los Angeles Tamés, a city councillor in Atizapán de Zaragoza, was assassinated in front of her home on 5 September 2001 (*Los Angeles Times* 14 Apr. 2002; AP 6 Sept. 2002; *The New York Times* 5 Sept. 2002; *Wall Street Journal* 12 Apr. 2002).

At the time of her death, María de los Angeles Tamés was planning to resign from the city council and to submit evidence to Mexican government authorities that would have implicated the municipal government in acts of corruption, racketeering and drug trafficking (*Los Angeles Times* 7 Mar. 2002). The mayor of Atizapán, Juan Antonio Dominguez, was put under house arrest following an investigation (*The Washington Post* 8 Mar. 2002). María de los Angeles Tamés and Juan Antonio Dominguez were members of the same political party, the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN) (*ibid.*).

The Attorney General of the State of Mexico, Alfonso Navarrete Prida, stated that María de los Angeles Tamés had been killed because she was on the verge of exposing a "complex network of corruption" led by Juan Antonio Dominguez (*The New York Times* 5 Sept. 2002). The Attorney General noted that audits of municipal finances had shown that some bribes accepted by the former mayor had exceeded US\$40,000 per year (*ibid.*). In September 2002, the investigation into the municipal councillor's death was in its final stages, and was expected to prove that the former mayor had been involved in the misappropriation of over one million US dollars in public funds (AP 6 Sept. 2002).

Juan Antonio Dominguez and his former chief of staff, Daniel Garcia, were charged with engineering the murder of María de los Angeles Tamés (*Wall Street Journal* 12 Apr. 2002). The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the two men had been charged with "murder, extortion and fraud" and that they were still in jail awaiting trial (14 Apr. 2002). Four other suspects were under house arrest, while five others, four of whom were members of the Garcia family, were still being sought by the authorities (*Los Angeles Times* 14 Apr. 2002). Prosecutors charged Isaias Garcia, Daniel Garcia's brother, with hiring the gunman who killed María de los Angeles Tamés (*ibid.*). In early September 2002, the councillor's murderer was still at large (AP 6 Sept. 2002; *The New York Times* 5 Sept. 2002). An article from the Associated Press indicated that the authorities of the State of Mexico had issued a warrant for the arrest of Jaime Ortega Gonzalez, the suspected gunman (6 Sept. 2002).

On 26 October 2002, *La Jornada* reported that the judicial police of the State of Mexico had arrested Felipe Reyes Alpizar Ortiz as a suspect in the assassination of the city councillor. Reyes Alpizar tried to bribe police officers to avoid arrest (*La Jornada* 26 Oct. 2002). The Attorney General of the State of Mexico said that Felipe Reyes Alpizar was Jaime González Ortega's accomplice (*ibid.*). In a video shown by the Public Ministry to journalists, Felipe Reyes Alpizar denied having killed the victim, but admitted to driving the pick-up truck that Jaime González Ortega had been in just before the victim was killed (*ibid.*). According to Reyes Alpizar, the two men worked for Juan Antonio Dominguez (*ibid.*). The Attorney General stated that Felipe Reyes Alpizar would be subject to an injunction restricting his right to freedom of movement (*arraigo judicial*) until he appeared in criminal court in Barrientos (*ibid.*). The Attorney General also stated that he was launching a preliminary investigation into whether Antonio Vega de la Garza, the former director of Atizapán de Zaragoza's public security, had been involved in the murder of María de los Angeles Tamés (*ibid.*).

In December 2002, Felipe Reyes Alpizar stated that he had been "tortured" by officials of the Public Ministry to get him to confess to participating in the murder of María de los Angeles Tamés and to force him to identify the two Atizapán employees who planned the murder; he also denied having had conversations with the former mayor, Juan Antonio Dominguez, and his chief of staff, Daniel García (*Reforma* 10 Dec. 2002).

In January 2003, Ernesto Hernández Tapia, another witness in the María de los Angeles Tamés case, testified before Judge Alejandro Jordán Nava that the signature that appeared on the statements that he allegedly made about the former mayor was a forgery and that he too had been [translation] "tortured" by judicial police officers

(*Diario de México* 16 Jan. 2003). This testimony apparently started rumours that claimed that the former mayor would be released on 13 April 2003, after having been in prison for one year (*ibid.*).

On 4 February 2003, *Reforma* reported that Francisco Pérez Mendoza, one of the judicial police officers who had been summoned to appear before Judge Jardán in October 2002, finally testified before the judge that he had never been a police officer in the State of Mexico and that his life had been threatened by Felipe Reyes Alpizar at his trial (*Reforma* 4 Feb. 2002). However, no one close to Felipe Reyes Alpizar heard him utter threats against Francisco Pérez Mendoza (*ibid.*). Another *Reforma* article indicated on 26 February 2003 that two other judicial police officers, Carlos Arenas Polanco and Martín Martínez, who were supposed to appear in the criminal trial of Felipe Reyes Alpizar and Daniel Garcia, failed to appear. The officers were supposed to clear up contradictory testimony that they had given during other hearings (*Reforma* 26 Feb. 2003). Leonel Prior, Daniel Garcia's lawyer, asked the court to take disciplinary measures (*apercibimiento*) against the two police officers by issuing them a fine or having them arrested for their failure to comply with the court authority (*por su desacato a la autoridad judicial*) (*ibid.*).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Internet sites, including:

Amnesty International

La Crónica [Mexico City]. Search engine

Human Rights Watch

Search engines:

Alltheweb.com

Google

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