

URGENT ACTION

WATER RIGHTS ACTIVISTS THREATENED IN MEXICO

Community activists in Coyotepec, Mexico state, received telephone threats which could be linked to their work defending the right to fair access to water. They and other members of the local environmental group they are part of are at risk of further attacks.

On 15 March, **Vicente Moreno Domínguez**, a human rights activist in Coyotepec, Mexico state, received a threatening phone call from an unidentified man who said: "You and the 'Japanese' are going to be done in" (*A ti y al Japonés se los va a cargar la chingada*). "The Japanese" is nickname for Sergio Velázquez Morales, another community activist. The same day, **Emeterio Nonato Reyna**, another activist from the same community also received an intimidating phone call. The caller identified himself as "Licenciado Carlos" and said: "We have already left someone dead over there" (*Ya dejamos por ahí muerto a alguien*). Emeterio Nonato Reyna hung up as soon as he heard this.

A formal complaint regarding both threatening calls has been filed at the Office of the Attorney General of the Federal District (Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal).

On 5 September 2013 Amnesty International documented an attack against Vicente Moreno Domínguez and other community members, believed to be targeted as a result of their peaceful activities defending the right to fair access to water. As a result, Vicente Moreno Domínguez was provided "intermittent" police protection but this stopped in January 2014. Sergio Velázquez Morales, however, was refused protection by the Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists on the grounds that he was not considered a human rights defender. Emeterio Nonato Reyna has not requested protection as this is the first threat he has received.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- ✓ Calling for full and immediate federal and state protection measures to ensure the safety of water rights activists in Coyotepec, including Vicente Moreno Domínguez and Emeterio Nonato Reyna, in accordance with their wishes;
- ✓ Calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the telephone threats received by Vicente Moreno Domínguez and Emeterio Nonato Reyna, including any possible links to the municipal authorities, and for all those responsible to be brought to justice;
- ✓ Reminding the authorities of their obligation to protect human rights defenders and urging them to guarantee the rights of all members of Coyotepec community to fair access to water.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 MAY 2014 TO:

Governor of Mexico state
Eruviel Ávila Villegas
Lerdo Poniente No. 300
Palacio del Poder Ejecutivo, Col. Centro,
C.P. 5000, Toluca, Estado de México
México.
Fax: +52 722 2760046
Email: eruviel.avila@edomex.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Governor
Minister of Interior
Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong
Secretario de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, col. Juárez, C.P. 6600,
México D.F., México.
Fax: +52 55 5093 3414 (keep trying)
Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Local Human Rights Organization
Centro de Derechos Humanos Zeferino
Ladrillo
Email: cdhzl.presidencia@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is first update of UA 252/13. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/061/2013/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Members of the community of Coyotepec have opposed the takeover of control of local water supplies by the municipal president, which they fear will result in the water being used for commercial purposes and reduce their access. Protesters have held demonstrations outside the town hall and several activists have been threatened, including by armed men with apparent links to the municipal government.

Local community activists who organize to defend their rights against powerful groups, often operating with the protection of municipal authorities, frequently face threats or harassment in reprisal for their work. For instance, in November 2012 José Ramón Aniceto Gómez and Pascual Agustín Cruz were released from prison after spending three years in jail on trumped up charges in reprisal for their work defending access to water in Atla, in the central state of Puebla.

Human rights defenders and journalists often face attacks, threats, intimidation and abduction and killing in reprisal for their legitimate and vital work. Those behind the attacks are almost never brought to justice. Amnesty International has welcomed the establishment of the Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in 2012. Nevertheless, many of the more than 100 defenders and journalists at risk who have sought protection have not received a timely or effective response, creating frustration, insecurity and disillusion. Despite the government's assertions that the mechanism is working effectively, it is far from being fully operational as it lacks trained staff, resources and the high level political support necessary to ensure that its protection measures are implemented by authorities at all levels. The impunity enjoyed by those responsible for attacks due to ineffective investigations, often conducted by state authorities who are suspected of involvement in threats, continues to foster tolerance of attacks. The Mechanism should be just one part of a comprehensive strategy to address violence against those defending human rights and journalists. The federal government has so far failed to respond convincingly to this prevailing climate of hostility to defenders and journalists in several states.

Name: Vicente Moreno Domínguez and Emeterio Nonato Reyna
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 252/13 Index: AMR 41/012/2014 Issue Date: 21 March 2014