

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bolivia-investigative-reporter-fears-for-14-09-2011,40983.html>

Americas - Bolivia

Urgent protection

Investigative reporter fears for her life, requests protection

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Reporters Without Borders joins other national and international NGOs that defend freedom of expression in urging the Bolivian authorities to provide adequate protection to the journalist **Mónica Oblitas** and her family at once. Oblitas has been getting threats in connection with an investigative report and fears that she and her 20-year-old son could be killed.

Employed by *iOH!*, a magazine linked to the daily *Los Tiempos*, Oblitas told Reporters Without Borders she has received repeated threats ever since she exposed the corrupt practices of Ericka Hinojosa Saavedra, a forensic doctor at the Institute for Forensic Research (IDIF) in El Alto, a city just to the west of La Paz.

Without carrying out proper examinations, Hinojosa was reportedly selling bogus medical certificates to people who said they had been injured or had been the victims of violence. The national prosecutor general's office fired Hinojosa after her activities had been exposed but, according to Oblitas, the judicial investigation has suffered unexplained delays.

Oblitas exposed Hinojosa by going to her office on 28 March and obtaining one of these false medical certificates in return for payment of money. She recorded Hinojosa's agreement to the deal and the issue of the certificate on a hidden camera. The story was covered in April in the Sucre-based daily *Correo del Sur* and the La Paz-based daily *La Prensa*.

Since then, Oblitas has been getting anonymous calls and messages containing death threats, which she has been reporting on her personal [blog](#). The text messages received on her phone have included: "Your days are numbered," "Do you like to play with forensic doctors," "The next certificate will be yours" and "Disappear."

"Your son is wearing a nice red jacket," one of the messages said, implicitly warning that her family could also be targeted. Three unidentified individuals in a car broke the windows of her home in April. She has been receiving threats constantly since then, she added.

"In the absence of any response from the authorities to her distressing situation, Oblitas has turned to international organizations such as ours," Reporters Without Borders said. "But it is the job of the competent authorities to ensure her protection. We cannot do it for them. We therefore call on the Bolivian judicial authorities to quickly take the necessary measures."

The press freedom organization added: "We also hope that the information provided by Oblitas will be used to establish the truth in what is a major scandal."
