

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS HARASSED IN MEXICO

Two prominent human rights lawyers in Mexico have repeatedly suffered harassment and intimidation as a result of their work. A full investigation into the incidents must be carried out and their safety guaranteed.

Well known human rights lawyer **Leonel Rivero Rodríguez** has reported that his office, which is also his home in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas state, was broken into on 10 March. The back doors were left open and the lights in his office left on, but no confidential documents seemed to have been taken. Similarly on 4 March, three unknown men tried to force their way into a hotel where Leonel Rivero Rodríguez was meeting with community members from Michoacán state regarding a sensitive case that he and his colleague from the Defensa Estratégica en Derechos Humanos A.C., **Augusto César Sandino Rivero Espinosa**, are representing. This intimidation has been reported to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos).

On 17 January Leonel Rivero Rodríguez received a threatening telephone call. The unknown caller said: "Look, do not fuck around with me, I am telling you, because I am, I am, I am not going to tell you who I am but I am something" (*Mira no me estés chingando la madre porque te estoy hablando bien verdad, porque yo soy, yo soy, no te voy a decir quién soy verdad pero soy algo*). He subsequently filed a formal complaint with the Federal Attorney General's Office (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR), however, there has been no substantive investigation to identify the caller and the PGR informed Leonel Rivera of its intention to archive the case. In response to these incidents and on the request of the federal human rights defender's protection mechanism, the Chiapas state government has promised to send a patrol car to Leonel Rivero's house.

Leonel Rivero Rodríguez has reported other incidents of harassment and surveillance in the past. On several occasions in March 2013, messages were left on his voice mail with recordings of personal conversations he had had during the day and in meetings with clients, suggesting that he was under surveillance and that those monitoring him had access to his home and office.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to guarantee effective safety of Leonel Rivero Rodríguez and Augusto César Sandino Rivero Espinosa of the Defensa Estratégica en Derechos Humanos A.C., in accordance with their wishes;
- Demanding that they carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the telephone threat on 17 January and the break-in on 10 March, including evidence that suggests it was not a robbery, and the other threatening incidents reported to the authorities;
- Calling on them to ensure that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals, including human rights lawyers working on potentially sensitive cases.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 APRIL 2014 TO:

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Jesús Murillo Karam
Paseo de la Reforma 211-213
Col. Cuauhtémoc, C.P. 06500
Distrito Federal, México
Fax: +52 55 5346 0908
Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Attorney General /

Estimado Señor Procurador

Minister of the Interior

Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, col. Juárez, Cuauhtémoc
Distrito Federal, México, C.P. 06600
Fax: +52 55 5093 3414
Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr.

Secretario

And copies to:

Local NGO

Defensa Estratégica en Derechos
Humanos A.C.
Email: leonelriverdgz@yahoo.com.mx

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS HARASSED IN MEXICO

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The lawyers at the Defensa Estratégica en Derechos Humanos are working on a number of sensitive cases including the suspected enforced disappearance of two alleged members of an armed opposition group, as well as members of an Indigenous community in Michoacan who were arrested on the grounds of their involvement in a community self-defence group. After the incidents of intimidation in March 2013, Leonel Rivero Rodríguez requested protection measures from the Mechanism for Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists which provided three of the lawyers with temporary police protection.

In the past, Leonel Rivero Rodríguez and Augusto César Sandino Rivero Espinosa have been the recipients of special protection measures ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights after receiving threats in relation to another case.

A Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists was unanimously approved by both houses of Mexico's parliament, and signed by the President, in 2012. The process for implementing the law has now started, including the direct participation of representatives of civil society, however operational protocols, clear guidelines on cooperation between the federal and state authorities and resources urgently need to be put in place to guarantee its effectiveness. It is vital that the authorities do not assume that their responsibilities are restricted to establishing a protection mechanism and that there is a vital flow of communication between the federal, state and municipal governments.

Name: Leonel Rivero Rodríguez (m), Augusto César Sandino Rivero Espinosa (m) & colleagues

Gender m: both

UA: 57/14 Index: AMR 41/008/2014 Issue Date: 14 March 2014