

PUBLIC

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UA 48/06 Fear for safety

MEXICO Erica Serrano Farías (f), lawyer representing environmentalist network ROGAZ
Her family

A hand-grenade was left outside a restaurant run by the family of lawyer Erica Serrano Farías on 23 February, in an apparent attempt to intimidate her because of her work representing a network of environmentalist groups campaigning against the construction of a tourist development in the municipality of Zihuatanejo, Guerrero State. The police appear reluctant to investigate properly, and Amnesty International believes that Erica Serrano Farías and her family are in danger.

Erica Serrano Farías represents the *Red de Organizaciones Ambientalistas de Zihuatanejo*, Network of Environmentalist Organizations from Zihuatanejo, which is campaigning to prevent the construction of a tourist development called *Marina Puerto Mío* in the Bay of Zihuatanejo, in the southern State of Guerrero. ROGAZ claims that the combined cruise-ship marina and residential complex will damage the environment of the bay severely, and will cause pollution that will destroy the livelihood of local fishermen.

The hand-grenade was reportedly found by the young son of one of the restaurant staff in the early afternoon, about one meter away from the restaurant's front door. Erica Serrano's mother called the municipal police, who took the grenade away reluctantly.

The Director of the Municipal Police (*Director de Seguridad Pública*) went to see Erica Serrano later that day. He reportedly told her and her family that the grenade was "for the exclusive use of the army" (*uso exclusivo del ejército*) but was harmless as the detonator had been removed. The restaurant is near the shore, but well above the high tide mark. Despite this, the Director suggested that the grenade might have been carried by a wave. Alternatively, he suggested it might have been left there to frighten Erica Serrano. An investigation was not formally opened until Erica Serrano filed a complaint with the Federal Prosecutor's Office (*ministerio público federal*).

Erica Serrano Farías has argued against the construction of the *Marina Puerto Mío* before the Latin American Water Tribunal – a non-compulsory ethical tribunal composed of environmental experts who study key cases and give expert advice and scientific recommendations to state authorities – which is holding its first public hearing in Mexico City at the end of March. She had been in Mexico City presenting the case when the grenade was found.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Social activists and human rights defenders have frequently been the target of threats, harassment and smear campaigns, particularly from the state and municipal authorities. Those responsible are rarely identified or brought to justice, principally because official investigations are ineffective. The authorities also often fail to demonstrate that they are committed to the legitimate role of human rights defenders in the country.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Erica Serrano Farías and her family, as a hand-grenade was found outside their restaurant on 23 February;

- calling for a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the grenade incident, for the findings to be published and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Erica Serrano Farías do not suffer any further intimidation as a result of her work as a human rights and environmental activist, and to guarantee that she will receive protection in accordance with her own wishes;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

State Governor

Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo
Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero
Boulevard Rene Juarez Cisneros No. 62, Edificio B
Ciudad de los Servicios, CP 39075, Chilpancingo
Guerrero, Mexico

Fax: +52 747 47 14788 (if someone answers, say "Tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Governor /Señor Gobernador

Attorney General of Guerrero

Lic. Eduardo Murueta Urrutia
Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Guerrero
Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6+300
Tramo Chilpancingo- Petaquillos, Chilpancingo 39090, Guerrero, Mexico

Fax: + 52 747 47 22328

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador

Director of the Zihuatanejo Municipal Police

Eduardo Enrique Domínguez Maganda
Director de Seguridad Pública
Paseo del deportista s/n, Col. El Limón, CP. 40880, Zihuatanejo, Guerrero

Fax: +52 755 5545355

Salutation: Dear Director/Estimado Director

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Daniel Cabeza de Vaca,
Procurador General de la República, Paseo de la Reforma No. 211-213, piso 16
Col. Cuahutemoc, México DF. CP. 06500, México

Fax: +52 55 5346 0983/08 (if someone answers, say "tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Procurador

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C.
Serapio Rendon 57-B, Col. San Rafael, 06470, México D.F. Mexico

and to diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 April 2006.