

URGENT ACTION

ATTACK ON SHELTER FOR MIGRANTS IN MEXICO

Staff at a shelter for undocumented migrants in north-eastern Mexico have received repeated threats. The migrants staying at the shelter and the staff working there are in danger.

In the early hours of 11 October, a member of staff at the Belen Migrants shelter (*Belén, Posada del Migrante*) in Saltillo, Coahuila state, heard loud noises coming from outside the shelter. The member of staff looked out onto the street and saw a group of 12 people running away and the electricity meter had been destroyed leaving the shelter without power.

On 25 October at 2am, staff at the shelter heard threats being shouted from outside the building, such as "fucking faggots" (*pinches putos*) and "get out of here you dicks" (*larguense pendejos*), and saw people throwing stones at the shelter, smashing several of the windows and destroying the electricity transformer. Since 14 October, three members of staff (Sister María Guadalupe Argüello, Alberto Xicoténcatl Carrasco and Sandra Luz Albicker Aguilera) have been receiving anonymous phone calls at the office and at home, between 2am and 5am. The caller never speaks, and the only noise is what sounds like a heartbeat.

Since 5 October, Priest Pedro Pantoja Arreola who runs the Belen Migrants shelter has received a series of threatening phone calls to his mobile phone during the night and early hours of the morning telling him "go fuck yourself" (*chinga tu madre*) and "you'd do better doing something else" (*ya mejor dedícate a otra cosa*). He has so far received 10 such phone calls.

Shelter staff have filed two complaints with the State Prosecutor's Office (*Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado*, PGJE) but the Office have not opened an investigation into the threats or ordered any effective protection for the shelter and its staff. The State Prosecutor's Office has suggested closing the shelter altogether, as the harassment is unlikely to stop.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of those working at the Belén Migrants' shelter;
- Calling on the authorities to conduct a full and prompt investigation into the attack on 25 October on the Belén Migrants' Shelter and into the threats against its workers;
- Calling on the authorities to adopt, without delay, effective protection measures to ensure the safety of those working at the Belén Migrants' Shelter;
- Calling on the authorities to recognise the important and legitimate work of the shelter in providing humanitarian assistance to migrants.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 DECEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont
 Secretario de Gobernación
 Bucareli 99, 1er piso
 Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc
 México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO
Fax: +52 55 5093 3414
Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx
**Salutation: Dear Minister/
 Señor Secretario**

Governor of Coahuila

Profesor Humberto Moreira Valdés
 Gobernador del Estado de Coahuila
 Palacio de Gobierno,
 1er. Piso Juárez e Hidalgo s/n
 Zona Centro. C.P. 25000
 Saltillo, Coahuila MEXICO
Fax: +52 844 411 8585
**Salutation: Dear Governor/
 Señor Gobernador**

President of the National Commission of Human Rights

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández
 Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de
 los Derechos Humanos (CNDH)
 Edificio "Héctor Fix Zamudio", 6° piso
 Blvd. Adolfo López Mateos n° 1922,
 Col.Tiacopac San Ángel, Del. Á.Obrégón
 México D.F., C.P. 01040, MÉXICO
Fax: +52 55 5681 7199
**Salutation: Señor Presidente/
 Dear President**

COPIES TO: Belen Migrants' Shelter, Mexico **Fax + 52 844 4 14 83 17** and diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



SHELTER FOR MIGRANTS ATTACKED IN MEXICO

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hundreds of thousands of irregular migrants (those without official travel documents) attempt to travel through Mexico from Central and South America every year to reach the USA. Many are detained by the Mexican migration authorities and returned to their countries of origin. Amnesty International recently visited Mexico to investigate reports of human rights violations against these people. It found that many had been kidnapped by gangs, sometimes with the complicity of local officials. Impunity for abuses against migrants, who are extremely vulnerable, has allowed these abuses to increase since about 2003, despite government commitments to ensure respect of migrants' rights. Migrant shelters provide temporary humanitarian assistance, such as food and medical attention, to migrants during their journey.

Further information on UA: 277/09 Index: AMR 41/053/2009 Issue Date: 9 October 2009

