

URGENT ACTION

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS DEFENDERS THREATENED

A coordinator of the migrants' shelter All for Them (Todos por Ellos) and others at the shelter in Tapachula, Chiapas State, southwest Mexico were threatened with death by a gang member. Help arrived, although not via official protection measures. The lives of staff, migrants and volunteers at the shelter could be at risk.

On 24 June **José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez** (also known as Hermano Ramón), coordinator of the All for Them (**Todos por Ellos**) migrants' shelter, was threatened with death by a former resident of the shelter who subsequently joined a well-known Central American local gang. The aggressor said to José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez, "I'm sorry brother, I know you've helped me but I have to kill you, I have to kill everyone here in the shelter, I have to kill you all because I have been ordered to do it" (*Perdóneme hermano, yo sé que usted me ha hecho muchos paros pero lo tengo que matar, tengo que matar a los que están acá en el albergue, tengo que matarlos porque me mandan a hacerlo*).

Another coordinator of the shelter, **Jorge Adevar Echeverría Escalante**, asked the state police officer stationed in a vehicle outside the shelter for help. This officer is supposed to provide protection as part of the security measures by the federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, however he failed to take any action. José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez then activated the panic button provided as part of the same security measures, however he only received an answer over 20 minutes later and in the meantime had called a federal police commander. A police patrol car arrived at the shelter around 45 minutes after the call to the federal police commander was made, and not as part of the Mechanism security measures, by which time the aggressor had left.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to provide effective protection to José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez, Jorge Adevar Echeverría Escalante, staff, volunteers and migrants at the Todos por Ellos shelter, in strict accordance with their wishes and review those measures already in place;
- Urging them to initiate a full and impartial investigation into the threat against shelter staff on 24 June, for the person responsible to be held to account and for measures to be taken to ensure the threat is not carried out;
- Expressing concern that the security measures provided by the Federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists failed to be immediately activated;
- Calling for federal and state authorities to combat criminal gangs targeting irregular migrants in Chiapas State and migrants' rights defenders working on their behalf, and hold to account any public officials implicated in colluding with gang members.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 AUGUST 2014 TO:

Minister of the Interior

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

Attorney General of the Republic

Jesús Murillo Karam
Paseo de la Reforma 211-213
Col. Cuauhtémoc, México D.F.
C.P. 06500, México
Fax: +52 55 5346 0908 (keep trying)
Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

And copies to:

Local NGO
Todos por Ellos
Email: ravesa@msn.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 the first update of UA 208/13. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/045/2013/en

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The All for Them (Todos por Ellos) migrants' shelter offers a temporary place for children, teenagers and underage migrants who are on their own while travelling through Mexico. Some of the main services the shelter provides to migrants are food, health, legal and sexual exploitation aid.

Hundreds of thousands of irregular migrants 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 has visited Mexico to investigate reports of human rights violations against these people, during which time the organization found that many irregular migrants 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, despite government commitments to ensure migrants' rights are respected.

Human rights defenders and journalists in Mexico often face attacks, threats, 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 disillusionment. 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 the 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, is fostering 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.

José Ramón Verdugo was threatened in 2013 in reprisal for his work providing safety to vulnerable young migrants. He was forced close the shelter until protection measures were agreed and implemented.

Name: José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez (m), Jorge Adevar Echeverría (m), and staff at the All for Them (Todos por Ellos) shelter
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 208/13 Index: AMR 41/024/2014 Issue Date: 26 June 2014