

URGENT ACTION

FEARS FOR STAFF OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

The office of a local human rights organization in the central-eastern Mexican state of Puebla has been raided and a threatening message was written on a board. Staff have previously been beaten and threatened with reprisals because of their work. Their safety could be at risk.

On 20 December at 10am staff of the human rights organization Workers' Support Centre (Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador, CAT) found that their office had been raided over the previous weekend. Some valuables and money were stolen, together with documents detailing the work of CAT. In addition, a message was written on their board: "You don't know who you're messing around with" (No saben con quien se meten).

CAT has raised awareness and provided training and advice on labour rights since 2001. They have worked with hundreds of industrial workers and emerging trade union leaders in many of the factories in Puebla state.

On 28 April 2010, CAT staff members Enrique Morales Montañó and Coral Juárez Melo were beaten by two men linked to the officially-sanctioned Mexican Workers' Regional Confederation (Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, CROM). On 5 August the authorities brought the assailants to account in an out-of-court settlement and the assailants committed not to interfere with the work of CAT again.

On 9 August Enrique Morales, Coral Juárez and their colleague María Luisa Rosina were approached by four men unknown to them as they were on their way to a meeting with workers. One of the men told them "We already know that you're from CAT. Tell Blanca that if you carry on messing around with CROM we'll give you a fright" (Ya sabemos que Ustedes son del CAT. Díganle a Blanca que si se siguen metiendo con la CROM les vamos a dar un susto). The director of CAT is called Blanca Velázquez.

Nobody has been brought to account for the death threats of 9 August or the office raid of 20 December.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of CAT's five members of staff;
- Urging the authorities to provide them with effective protection in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to carry out a full, swift and impartial investigation into the office raid of 20 December and the death threats of 9 August;
- Reminding the authorities of their duty to guarantee that human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear of reprisals as established in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 02 FEBRUARY 2011 TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. José Francisco Blake Mora
Secretario, Sec. de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez,
Delegación Cuauhtémoc,
México D.F., C.P. 06600, MÉXICO
Fax: (+52) 55 5093 3414
Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado
Señor Secretario**

Puebla state Governor

Lic. Mario Marín Torres
Gobernador del Estado de Puebla
Casa Aguayo, Av. 14 oriente 1204
Colonia El Alto, CP 72000, Puebla
Puebla, MÉXICO
Fax: +52 222 213 8805

Email: gobernador@puebla.gob.mx
**Salutation: Dear Governor/Estimado
Señor Gobernador**

Puebla state Attorney General

Lic. Rodolfo Archundia Sierra
Procurador General de Justicia del
Estado, Boulevard 5 de Mayo y 31
Oriente, Col. Ladrillera de Benítez,
Puebla, CP 72539, Puebla, MÉXICO
Fax: +52 222 243 5933
E: particular.pgj.puebla@hotmail.com

**Salutation: Dear Attorney
General/Estimado Señor Procurador**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country and to CAT (catpuebla@yahoo.com.mx). Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CAT provides relevant information and training to workers who are interested in challenging officially-recognized unions in their workplace. Mexico has a long history of large, officially-sanctioned trade unions operating in concert with company managers. Efforts by workers to establish independent trade unions in order to defend their interests on occasions have been met with hostility and violence. In many cases, state authorities have been accused of failing to prevent or punish these attacks.

Defending human rights can be a dangerous job in Mexico. Scores of activists have suffered death threats, intimidation, and harassment in the last few years. Some of them have been killed for doing their job. Mexican human rights defenders have demanded that the federal authorities adopt and implement an effective and comprehensive protection programme (mecanismo de protección). The authorities have acknowledged the importance of establishing a protection programme and have committed to delivering it on many occasions, but so far they have not fulfilled their promise.

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