

UA 21/01

Fear for**MEXICO Journalists in the State of Tamaulipas****(Killed:) Félix Alonso Fernández García (m), journalist**

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There is serious concern for the safety of journalists after a magazine editor was shot dead in Miguel Alemán, in the State of Tamaulipas. Amnesty is concerned for the safety of others investigating allegations of corruption and drug trafficking by past and present state officials in the region.

According to reports, on 18 January 2002, Félix Alonso Fernández, the editor of the magazine *Nueva Opción*, was shot and killed by unidentified attackers as he left a restaurant in the municipal town of Miguel Alemán.

The magazine had recently published articles accusing the ex-mayor of being closely linked to local drug cartels. During the 2001 election campaign, Félix Alonso also accused another political candidate of being involved with criminal organisations. After publishing these articles, he reportedly received death threats. As a consequence of these threats and fearing for his safety, he hired two bodyguards.

Initial reports suggest that police have failed to act promptly to identify and pursue those suspected of the killing.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Mexican journalists often face attacks and death threats because of their work, and many live in fear of reprisals from people or organisations they have written about. On 24 March 2001, the Subdirector of the daily newspaper, *El Imparcial de Matamoros*, Saúl Adrián Martínez González, was kidnapped, tortured and killed. On 9 April 2000, US Border Patrol agents discovered the body of Pablo Pineda, a reporter and photographer for *La Opinión* newspaper in Matamoros, Tamaulipas. The agents found the dead journalist with a bullet in the back of the head. Pablo Pineda had reportedly survived a previous attack by gunman in December 1999 and was severely beaten three years before. As far as Amnesty International is aware, the authorities have not however identified and prosecuted those responsible for either killing.

Crimes against journalists, committed in regions near the border with the United States, are very often linked to their work reporting on drug trafficking, corruption and the participation of state officials in these crimes. The authorities rarely investigate these cases effectively, leaving the perpetrators free to repeat their crimes. The killing of three journalists in less than two years in the State of Tamaulipas has raised serious concern for the safety of journalists carrying out their legitimate work.

In September 1988, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recommended that the Mexican authorities "adopt the necessary measures to punish the perpetrators of crimes committed against persons exercising the right to freedom of expression, including a speedy, effective and impartial investigation into complaints of harassment involving journalists ..."

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

- expressing concern at the killing of journalist Félix Alonso Fernández on 18 January 2002;

- insisting that the authorities undertake an exhaustive and independent investigation into the killing and that the results of the investigation be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of journalists in the State of Tamaulipas and urging the authorities to guarantee their safety, ensuring that they can carry out their legitimate work without fear of reprisal;
- citing the recommendation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that the Mexican authorities investigate complaints of harassment of journalists and punish those responsible for crimes against people exercising their freedom of expression.

**APPEALS TO:**President of the Republic

Lic. Vicente Fox Quesada  
 Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos  
 Residencia Oficial de "Los Pinos"  
 Col. San Miguel Chapultepec  
 México D.F., C.P. 11850  
 MEXICO

**Telegrams: President, Mexico D.F., Mexico****Fax: +525 55 516 9537****Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear Mr President**Governor of Tamaulipas

Lic. Tomás Yárrington Ruvalcaba  
 Gobernador del Estado de Tamaulipas  
 Palacio de Gobierno  
 Av. Juárez y 5 de Mayo  
 Ciudad Victoria 87009  
 Tamaulipas  
 MÉXICO

**Telegram: Gobernador del Estado de Tamaulipas, Tamaulipas, México****Fax: +52 131 887 01****Salutation: Dear Governor, Señor Gobernador**Attorney General of the State of Tamaulipas

Lic. Eduardo Garza Rivas  
 Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Tamaulipas  
 Palacio de Justicia  
 Boulevard Fraccedi Balboa s/n  
 Col. Centro  
 Ciudad Victoria 87000  
 Tamaulipas  
 MÉXICO

**Telegram: Procurador General, Tamaulipas, México****Fax: (+52 131) 28427****Salutation: Dear Attorney/ Señor Procurador**President of the National Commission for Human Rights

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández  
 Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)  
 Periférico Sur 3469, 5o piso  
 Col. San Jerónimo Lídice  
 México DF., 10200  
 México

Telegrams:Presidente de la CNDH, México D.F., México

Fax: (+52 55) 5668 0767 (There may be a message in Spanish. Just send the fax after the tone)

E-mail:correo@cndh.org.mx

Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

COPIES TO:

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MEXICO

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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 5 March 2002