

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

A human rights defender was kidnapped on 15 May, and held prisoner for almost a day: his organization has received threatening messages. All the members of the organization and their families are in grave danger.

According to human rights defender **José Enrique Morales Montaña**, a member of the organization Workers' Support Centre (Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador, CAT) in the central state of Puebla, four men in balaclavas kidnapped him on 15 May, while he was on his way to a conciliation and arbitration meeting to represent a group of textile industry workers. The kidnappers treated him roughly, putting a gun to his head several times, and threatened to kill him and other CAT members. The following day the kidnappers took away José Enrique Morales Montaña's backpack and his mobile phone. After 17 hours they released him, next to the highway to Veracruz. He was injured, but managed to make his way home. At around 5.30pm that day, CAT director **Blanca Velázquez** received a text message which read: "You are going to die, bitch" (*Te vas a morir, perra*). It was sent from José Enrique Morales Montaña's mobile phone.

Threatening texts from the same mobile number have continued. On 17 May, José Enrique Morales Montaña's wife received a text: "Your family is in danger and the next one will be one of your children as they are not safe yet" (*Tu familia corre peligro. Y el próximo será uno de tus hijos porque aún no están a salvo*). Later, Blanca Velázquez received another text: "The next one is you, damn you" (*La siguiente eres tú maldita*)

There has been a pattern of threats and intimidation against CAT members. In 2010 both the National Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos) and the Puebla State Human Rights Commission (Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos de Puebla, CEDH Puebla) officially told the authorities to protect CAT workers. However, the CEDH Puebla later decided to suspend the protection order unilaterally, without assessing the risk of further attacks and threats against CAT members.

Please write immediately in Spanish, English or your own language:

- Expressing concern for José Enrique Morales Montaña, Blanca Velázquez, their families and CAT colleagues and urging the authorities to take immediate action to protect them in accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on them to investigate the 15 May kidnap and ill-treatment of José Enrique Morales Montaña, the threat received by his wife, and threats received by Blanca Velázquez, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on them to guarantee the right of all trade unionists and human rights defenders to freedom of association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JUNE 2012 TO:

Governor of Puebla State

Rafael Moreno Valle

Juan de Palafox y Mendoza 204

Centro, C.P. 72000, Puebla

Puebla, México

Fax: +52 222 2322783 (when automated

voice answers, press SEND)

Email:

rafael.morenovalle@puebla.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Governor

Attorney General of Puebla State

Víctor Antonio Carrancá Bourget

Boulevard Héroes del 5 de Mayo y 31

Oriente, Col. Ladrillera de Benítez

Puebla, Puebla, México

Fax: +52 222 243 5933

Email:

particular.pqj.puebla@hotmail.com

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

And copies to:

Human rights NGO

PRODESC

Proyecto de Derechos Económicos,
Sociales y Culturales

Email: prodesc@prodesc.org.mx

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CAT provides 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 have sometimes been met with hostility and violence. In many cases, state authorities have been accused of failing to prevent or punish these attacks.

Human rights activists in Mexico frequently face threats and attacks in reprisal for their legitimate human rights work. Those responsible are virtually never held to account. Despite improved commitments by the authorities and the newly approved protection mechanism for the protection of defenders and journalists, intimidation and threats have continued.

Name: José Enrique Morales Montaña (m), Blanca velásquez (f), CAT members
Gender m/f: m & f

UA: 140/12 Index: AMR 41/033/2012 Issue Date: 18 May 2012