

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTORS THREATENED WITH VIOLENCE

On 24 October, a protest camp of communal landowners and striking miners was destroyed and burnt outside La Platosa silver mine in La Sierrita, northwest Mexico.

In the early morning of 24 October, a group of around 180 people destroyed and burnt the protest camp outside La Platosa mine in La Sierrita, Durango state. According to reports, the aggressors were carrying wooden sticks and stones, and arrived in five local buses and one belonging to the mining company, La Platosa. The communal landowners (*ejidatarios*) and members of the Section 309 (Sección 309) of the National Miners Union managed to escape unhurt.

According to information received, the aggressors were members of the Metallurgical and Steelworks Mining Union, Don Napoleon Gomez Sada (*Sindicato Minero Metalúrgico, Siderúrgico Don Napoleón Gómez Sada*). These union members arrived and did not allow the communal landowners to speak. They union members said: "We come with orders to remove you with beatings or with dead, just as happened in Coahuila" ("*Traemos órdenes de quitarlos a trancazos o con muertos, como pasó en Coahuila*"). A municipal police patrol car present at the camp did not take any action to deter the aggressors. Members of the Mexican army and the Federal Police also arrived later in the morning, yet took no action.

The protest camp was established to limit access to the mine. Communal farmers and mine workers participating in the protest claim that La Platosa mine operators have reneged on legal commitments to workers and the local community. The federal and state governments have so far failed to intervene, to ensure the dispute is resolved and human rights upheld. On 23 October, municipal police had told protesters that they would be evicted on 25 October, but did not provide evidence of a judicial order.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the federal and state authorities to guarantee the safety of the protestors of La Sierrita in the face of these threats and violence;
- Urging them to fully investigate the events on 24 October in which members of an official trade union used force to destroy a protest camp while public authorities watched on, and calling for all those responsible to be held accountable;
- Asking them to respect the protestors' right to peaceful protest and association, and ensure that the dispute respects the human rights of the community and striking miners.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 DECEMBER 2012 TO:

Governor of Durango State

Lic. Jorge Herrera Caldera
5 de Febrero #800 Pte, Col. Centro,
Durango,
Durango,
México, CP 34000
Fax: +52 618 827 0847 (keep trying)
Email: transparencia@durango.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Governor

Minister of Interior

Dr. Alejandro Poiré Romero
Secretaría 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

And copies to:

Local NGO

The Project of Economic, Social and
Cultural Rights
Email: prodesc@prodesc.org.mx

Send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 262/12. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/064/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The protestors at the encampment, many of whom are women and children, believe La Platosa silver mine has breached agreements with both the communal farmers on whose land the mine is situated, and mine workers who have sought to establish an independent trade union at the mine. On 29 August, protestors blocking the road to the mine were threatened with violence by 100 members of the army and police. As a result, the protestors ceased blocking the road but maintained the encampment. On 7 September, members of the Mexican army arrived at the protest camp and threatened to violently remove them. Attempts to reach a negotiated resolution to the conflict have so far failed.

A non-governmental human rights organization, The Project of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (*Proyecto de Derechos Económicos Sociales y Culturales, ProDESC*) – which has supported members of the community and miners participating in the protest – has faced repeated smear campaigns attacking its work with members of the community and miners.

Name: Communal landowners and striking miners of La Sierrita
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 262/12 Index: AMR 41/071/2012 Issue Date: 26 October 2012