

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

MEXICO

**Eréndira Cruzvillegas (f), director of human rights organization *Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social* (National Centre for Social Communication, CENCOS)  
Members of other human rights organizations in Oaxaca state**

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On 15 January, a car belonging to human rights defender Eréndira Cruzvillegas was vandalised in the city of Oaxaca, Oaxaca State. Amnesty International believes the incident and a series of anonymous threats she received in December 2004 are aimed at deterring her from her human rights work. She and other human rights defenders in Oaxaca State may be in danger.

Eréndira Cruzvillegas is the director of the human rights organization *Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social* (National Centre for Social Communication, CENCOS), based in Mexico City. On 15 January she was in the city of Oaxaca to meet with other non-governmental organizations. At approximately 1am, she parked her car close to where she was staying and got out. A few moments later, she witnessed another vehicle stopping near her car. A group of people reportedly got out and threw two bricks at the windshield of her car, before driving off again at speed.

This incident follows a number of anonymous threats sent by email to Eréndira Cruzvillegas at her office in Mexico City, which allegedly said she should stop interfering in the affairs of others. Amnesty International considers that this is part of a campaign to prevent CENCOS and other human rights defenders from carrying out their peaceful and legitimate work.

CENCOS has worked with other human rights organizations in Oaxaca, such as the Centro de Derechos Humanos "Bartolomé Carrasco" and the Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos, to ensure traditional indigenous elections are respected in the communities of San Blas Atempta, San Juan Lalana, Tututepec and Xanica. Violence has threatened to erupt in these areas since municipal elections in October 2004. The organization also supported the appeal to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights for protection for Raul Gatica, head of an indigenous organization *Consejo Indígena Popular de Oaxaca "Ricardo Flores Magón"* (CIPO -RFM), Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca, who reportedly received anonymous telephone threats in September 2004.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

A new governor came into power in Oaxaca at the end of 2004. However, violence surrounding elections during the year did not cease after municipal elections in 2004. At least 20 indigenous communities of more than 120 which conduct their elections according to traditional customs (*usos y costumbres*) remain locked in dispute. The local authorities are frequently accused of favouring one faction against another and not applying the law impartially, in effect fuelling violence and divisions.

Human rights defenders have frequently been the target of threats, harassment and smear campaigns. Those responsible are rarely brought to justice. The authorities have never effectively investigated these incidents or clearly demonstrated their commitment to the legitimate role of human rights defenders in the state. This problem has been particularly acute in Oaxaca State.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of human rights defender Eréndira Cruzvillegas following the attack on her car in the city of Oaxaca, Oaxaca State, and previous anonymous email threats sent to her at the CENCOS office in Mexico City;
- calling for an impartial, prompt and full investigation into the attack and threats, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for immediate measures to guarantee the safety of Eréndira Cruzvillegas, other members of CENCOS and all human rights defenders in Oaxaca State;
- calling on the authorities to ensure impartiality and respect for the electoral processes of indigenous communities and to take effective and timely action to prevent violence;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor of Oaxaca

Ulises Ruiz Ortiz

Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca

Carretera Oaxaca, Puerto Angel, Km. 9.5

Santa María Coyotopec, Oaxaca, Oaxaca, México, C. P. 71254

**Fax: + 52 951 50 20 530 (if someone answers the phone ask for "tono de fax, por favor")**

**Salutation: Señor Gobernador / Dear Governor**

Attorney General of Oaxaca

Lic. Patricia Villanueva Abraján

Procuradora del Estado de Oaxaca

Avenida Luis Echeverría s/n, La Experimental

San Antonio de la Cal, Oaxaca

Oaxaca 71236 Mexico

**Fax: +52 951 51 1 5519**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Estimada Procuradora**

Director of Human Rights - Interior Ministry

Maestro Ricardo Sepúlveda

Secretaría de Gobernación

Reforma 99, PISO 21, PH

Colonia Tabacalera

C.P. 06030, Mexico D.F. México

**Fax: + 52 55 51 28 02 34 ( if someone answers the phone ask for "tono de fax, por favor")**

**Salutation: Estimado Maestro/Dear Sir**

**COPIES TO:**

CENCOS - Human rights organization

Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social - CENCOS

Medellín 33 Col. Roma, México D.F., C.P. 06700, Mexico

Human rights organization in Oaxaca

Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos

Calle Crespo 524 Int. 4-E, Centro, Oaxaca, Oaxaca México CP 68000

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 3 March 2005.