

PUBLIC

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UA 36/03 Fear for safety / possible "disappearance"

MEXICO **Esmeralda Juárez Alarcón (f), aged 16**  
**Erika Abigail Loera Varela (f), aged 26**

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Two young women, Erika Abigail Loera Varela and Esmeralda Juárez, have been reported missing in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua State, on Mexico's northern border. Amnesty International is extremely concerned that their lives are in danger, fearing that the two women may have been abducted, fitting a pattern of "disappearances" of women in the state.

Erika Abigail was reportedly last seen on 20 December 2002 in Avenida de la Raza of Ciudad Juarez. On 8 January 2003, Esmeralda Juárez left her work at a stall in Carranza market in central Ciudad Juarez and has not been seen since. Esmeralda is a student of an IT academy in the city. According to reports, between 2001 and 2002 three young women who studied at the same school also went missing only to be later found murdered and sexually assaulted: Paloma Angélica Escobar Ledezma in Chihuahua city and Maria de los Angeles Acosta and Liliana Holguín de los Santos in Ciudad Juarez.

Amnesty International fears that the two women may be the latest victims in a series of abductions and murders of women in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua city over the last decade. Although responsibility for the crimes is not clear, Amnesty International is concerned they may amount to "disappearances" due to an apparent pattern of acquiescence or lack of due diligence on the part of the state authorities which has undermined the investigations.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

According to reports, over 200 women have been killed in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, Chihuahua State since 1993 and many others "disappeared". Many of the women killed or "disappeared" were reportedly economic migrants from other parts of Mexico, living in marginalised communities. They were employed by the *maquiladoras* (factories), in the region near the US border, set up by US and other foreign companies to exploit cheap labour and the favourable tariff conditions.

There has been growing concern at the failure of the authorities to investigate fully the cases of the murdered and "disappeared" women. The authorities have repeatedly claimed to solve these crimes, but new "disappearances" and murders continue. Families of victims and national and international human rights organizations, have expressed concern at irregularities within the official investigations. They claim the murders are not effectively or appropriately investigated with the perpetrators escaping justice, creating a climate of fear and suspicion for women in the state. In January 2002 Amnesty International wrote to the Mexican authorities requesting information on the progress of their investigations into the cases, and to insist on the need for immediate, thorough and impartial investigations. Amnesty International stressed the responsibility on the part of the Mexican authorities to take measures to ensure the safety of the women of the region. In response, the Mexican authorities failed to address many of the issues raised.

Human rights organizations and families of victims and lawyers who have campaigned on the cases over the years have been threatened and harassed.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Esmeralda Juárez and Erika Abigail;

- calling on the authorities to investigate the fate of Esmeralda Juárez Alarcón and Erika Abigail Loera who have not been seen since 8 January 2003 and 20 December 2002 respectively;
- urging prompt, full, effective and impartial investigations, enjoying the full collaboration of state and federal institutions, of all cases of women who have been murdered or gone missing in Chihuahua state in similar circumstances;
- calling for the authorities to take effective steps to prevent, investigate and punish violence against women in Chihuahua State.

**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:** + 52 5 2 77 23 76  
**Salutation:** Señor Presidente / Dear Mr President

Governor of Chihuahua State

Lic. Patricio Martínez  
Aldama 901  
Colonia Centro  
Chihuahua State  
Mexico

**Fax:** + 52 614 4429 3300 ext 1141  
**Salutation:** Dear Governor / Señor Gobernador

Attorney General of the Republic

General Rafael Marcial Macedo de la Concha  
**Procurador General de la Republica**  
**Procuraduría General de la República**  
Reforma Norte esq. Violeta 75  
Col. Guerrero  
Delegación Cuauhtémoc  
México D.F., C.P. 06300  
Mexico

**Fax:** +525 55 346 0983 (if someone answers, ask for the fax: *pedir tono de fax, por favor*)  
**Salutation:** Señor Procurador General / Dear Attorney General

Lic. Jesús José Solís  
Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Chihuahua  
Calle Vicente Guerrero 616  
Col Centro  
Chihuahua State  
CP. 31000  
Mexico

**Fax:** +52 614 415 0314  
**Salutation:** Dear Attorney General/ Señor Procurador

**COPIES TO:**

Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos A.C. (CMDPDH)  
Tehuantepec 155  
Col. Roma Sur  
Mexico DF

CP 5584 2731

**Email:** [cmdpdh@laneta.apc.org](mailto:cmdpdh@laneta.apc.org)

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 21 March 2003