

UA 82/99

Fear for

MEXICO Carina Ochoa, journalist (f)
All other staff of the magazine *La Guillotina*

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the journalist Carina Ochoa and other staff of the independent magazine *La Guillotina*, who have received repeated death threats.

On the night of 8 April 1999, a young man sat down opposite Carina Ochoa as she went home by train and started a conversation. He told her he knew about the holiday she had taken the week before and he described in detail what her colleagues had been doing. He also asked her about her recent trip to Spain to visit Spanish trade unionists and non-governmental organisations, and said:

"Que se cuidara porque le voy a cargar la chingada, y que le diga a sus compañeros que le bajaran, que se estuvieran quietos porque algo les puede pasar" (You should take care otherwise you are dead meat, and tell your colleagues to lie low, to keep quiet or something might happen to them).

La Guillotina staff have been threatened on many other occasions, for instance by having recorded music played to them over the phone, a common method of intimidation in Mexico. Their offices have been broken into. On 15 March, two of the magazine's staff who had just filmed a public meeting between local people and the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, (EZLN) Zapatista National Liberation Army, were stopped by armed gunmen who stole their equipment. On 17 March a recording of Scott Joplin's "The Sting" was left on the answering machine at their offices. All these threats were duly reported to the authorities, but they do not appear to have been investigated.

La Guillotina is a political and cultural magazine which has given coverage to the conflict in Chiapas as well as to the EZLN. As a result the magazine has attracted a widespread international interest, with many foreign observers passing through their offices, at a time when the Mexican authorities are trying to limit world wide attention on the region. For this reason it is believed that the Mexican authorities may be the source of the threats against the magazine's staff.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since President Zedillo came to power in 1994, numerous attacks on members of the press have been reported to Amnesty International, including beatings, short term "disappearances" and torture. A total of 428 cases of alleged human rights violations against journalists, including 11 murders, all committed during the first four years of President Zedillo's term of office, have been reported to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Journalists live in fear of reprisal attacks for reporting human rights violations by the authorities or linking them to other criminal activities. Most of the perpetrators of these violations have benefited from impunity as a result of the effective acquiescence of the authorities.

Furthermore, Amnesty International fears that these threats are part of a wider pattern of limiting foreign observation of the activities of the authorities in regions of conflict in the south of the country. (See "Mexico: New visa requirements jeopardise work of human rights defenders", News Service 101/98, AI Index: AMR 41/27/98, 29 May 1998).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at the threats against Carina Ochoa and other staff of the magazine *La Guillotina*;
- urging the authorities to take adequate measures to guarantee their safety;
- calling for prompt and thorough investigations into the threats against Carina Ochoa and all staff of *La Guillotina*, that the findings be made public and those responsible brought to justice (remember to quote her case number: 5A/00956/99-04);
- citing the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recommendation of 24 September 1998 ("Report on the situation of Human Rights in Mexico", OEA/Ser.L/V/II.100, paragraph 671) to: "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, human rights defenders, and members of community organisations".

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Francisco Labastida Ochoa
 Secretario de Gobernación, Secretaría de Gobernación
 Bucarelli 99, 1er piso, Col Juárez, 06699 México DF, MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México DF, México

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Salutation: Sr. Secretario / Dear Minister

Mayor of Mexico City

Ing. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano
 Jefatura de Gobierno del Distrito Federal
 Plaza de la Constitución esq.
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Salutation: Sr. Ing / Dear Mayor

Attorney General of Mexico City

Lic. Samuel del Villar Krechmar
 Procurador General de Justicia
 del Distrito Federal District
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Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

National Commission of Human Rights

Licda. Mireille Roccatti Velazquez
 Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)
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Human Rights non-governmental organization

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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 2 June 1999.