

PUBLIC

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17 February 2006

Further Information on UA 37/05 (AMR 41/004/2005, 16 February 2005) and follow-ups (AMR 41/024/2005, 8 July 2005; AMR 41/047/2005, 19 December 2005) - Fear for safety/Death threats

**MEXICO** Lydia Cacho Ribeiro (f), journalist and President of the *Centro Integral de Atención a las Mujeres (CIAM)*, Women's Assistance Centre, human rights defender

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Fears for the safety of Lydia Cacho Ribeiro have increased, after a Mexican national newspaper published the transcripts of telephone conversations allegedly involving state authorities, including the Governor of Puebla, and important businessmen, apparently plotting to silence her through judicial harassment. Amnesty International believes that the alleged content of the conversations now in the public domain makes her more vulnerable to further threats and reprisals.

Lydia Cacho is a journalist and the president of the organization *Centro Integral de Atención a las Mujeres (CIAM)*, Women's Assistance Centre. She has highlighted abuses suffered by women and children, and the impunity that those responsible often enjoy. In 2005, she published a book alleging the involvement of important businessmen in a child pornography ring. Amnesty International considers that she has been judicially harassed since last December, when one of the businessmen named in the book filed a complaint of defamation against her. Lydia Cacho was detained at her home in the city of Cancun and taken 1,500 kilometres to the city of Puebla to face charges of defamation. She was held in custody for 30 hours before being brought before a judge and released on bail of \$10,000. Her trial is still in progress. In January, proceedings were transferred from Puebla state to the state of Quintana Roo, where she lives. If found guilty, Lydia Cacho could face up to four years in prison.

The alleged telephone conversations published in the media apparently reveal a plot to judicially harass Lydia Cacho by charging her with defamation. Furthermore, according to the transcript of the alleged conversations, the businessman who filed the defamation complaint against her said that he expected Lydia Cacho to be sexually abused while she was detained. The governor of Puebla has denied any involvement in this alleged plot. The authenticity of the telephone recordings has not been verified.

Defamation is a criminal offence in Mexico and is sometimes used to silence and intimidate journalists reporting on matters of public interest. In Puebla the offence is punishable by six months to four years in prison. The Inter American Commission on Human Rights has called for defamation to be a civil offence and not a criminal one. Mexico has not taken steps to adopt this recommendation.

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

- expressing serious concern for the safety of Lydia Cacho Ribeiro, following the publication of telephone conversations between an important businessman and state authorities allegedly revealing a plot to judicially harass her;
- expressing concern that this incident may increase the likelihood of threats and attacks against Lydia Cacho;
- calling on federal and state authorities to guarantee her safety in accordance with her wishes;
- expressing concern that the charge of defamation is sometimes used to silence those who speak out on sensitive issues, in violation of the right to freedom of expression;
- call for the implementation of the Inter American Commission on Human Rights recommendation to make defamation and liable civil offences not liable to imprisonment;

**APPEALS TO:**

Human Rights Commission of the Congress of the State of Puebla

María de los Angeles Elizabeth Gómez Cortes,  
Presidenta de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Congreso del Estado,  
Congreso del Estado de Puebla

5 Poniente No. 128, Col Centro, CP. 72000, Puebla, Puebla

**Email: [panelizabethgomez@congresopuebla.gob.mx](mailto:panelizabethgomez@congresopuebla.gob.mx)**

**Fax: + 52 222 248 5319, ext 231/ + 52 222 2485 451, ext. 231 (if someone answers, say "tono de fax por favor")**

**Salutation: Dear President of the Comisión/ Estimada Presidenta de la Comisión/**

Attorney General of Puebla

Maestra Blanca Laura Villeda Martínez

Procuradora General de Justicia del Estado de Puebla

Boulevard 5 de mayo y 31 Oriente, Colonia Ladrillera de Benitez, Puebla, Puebla, CP 72539, Mexico

**Fax: + 52 222 240 8105**

**Email: [titular.pgj@puebla.gob.mx](mailto:titular.pgj@puebla.gob.mx)**

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

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Daniel Cabeza de Vaca,

Procurador General de la República,

Paseo de la Reforma No. 211-213, piso 16

Col. Cuahutemoc, México DF. CP. 06500, México

**Fax: +52 55 5346 0983/08 (if someone answers, say "tono de fax por favor")**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Procurador**

Director of Human Rights – Interior Ministry

Dr. Ricardo Sepúlveda

Secretaría de Gobernación

Reforma 99, PISO 21, PH, Colonia Tabacalera, C.P. 06030, México D.F. México

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

**Salutation: Dear Sir/Estimado Doctor**

**COPIES TO:**

CIAM - Human rights organization

*Centro Integral de Atención a las Mujeres - CIAM Cancún A.C.*

Calle 12 poniente · 66, SMZA 63 Cancún Quintana Roo 77500, MEXICO

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 31 March 2006.