

PUBLIC

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UA 233/99

Fear for safety / death threats

6 September 1999

MEXICO

Digna Ochoa y Plácido (human rights lawyer)
members of the Prodh (human rights NGO)

Members of the human rights organization *Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez"*, AC (PRODH), "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" Human Rights Centre, have received death threats, sent to their offices on 3 September 1999.

According to reports, these threats are related to the abduction on 9 August 1999 of Digna Ochoa y Plácido, a human right lawyer working with PRODH, in Mexico City. Digna Ochoa was forced into the back of a car by two unknown men and punched in the stomach. She was later released, but was told she would be killed if she drew attention to her situation as she left the car.

On 3 September 1999, PRODH received three letters with the following death threats: "*Reverendo padre aquí está su sentencia de muerte*" ("Reverend Father here is your death sentence"); "*El que sigue es otro, hijos de puta. Así se los cargará su madre a todos*" ("This is another [threat], sons of bitches. This way you are all going to be dead meat"); and "*A los que se creen los omnipotentes también se mueren*" ("Those who believe they are omnipotent also die"). Attached to the death threat was one of Digna Ochoa's business cards, stolen when she was abducted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PRODH is a non governmental human rights organization founded by Jesuits. The organization has long worked in collaboration with Amnesty International and has played an important role in investigating, documenting and defending human rights in Mexico.

In 1996, Amnesty International documented six separate occasions in which members of the PRODH were targeted with acts of intimidations, including death threats (see UA 200/96, AMR 41/43/96, 13 August 1996, and follow-ups: AMR 41/51/96, 29 August; AMR 41/56/96, 26 September; AMR 41/62/96, 11 October; AMR 41/72/96, 11 November, AMR 41/79/96, 27 November). To Amnesty International's knowledge no one has been brought to justice for any of these crimes.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Digna Ochoa y Plácido and other human rights defenders working with the Mexican City-based PRODH, following Digna Ochoa's abduction on 9 August 1999, and the issuing of death threats to the PRODH staff on 3 September 1999;
- calling for the authorities to take necessary steps to guarantee the safety of Digna Ochoa and all the members of PRODH;
- calling for a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the abduction of Digna Ochoa, as well as into the death threats against members of PRODH, that the findings be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the Mexican government to adhere to its commitment to the resolution on Human Rights Defenders in the Americas, adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) on 7 June 1999, which states in point 2: "To urge member states to persist in their efforts to provide Human Rights Defenders with the necessary guarantees and facilities to continue freely carrying out their work of promoting and protecting human rights, at the national and/or regional levels, in accordance with internationally recognized principles and agreements";
- urging that the Mexican government ensures that the principles and spirit contained within the 'Declaration on the Right and Responsibility Of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote And Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms', adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1998, are fully adhered to.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General of the Republic
Lic. Jorge Madrazo
Procurador General de la República
Av Reforma, esq. Violeta
Col Guerrero
Mexico DF, CP 06300
MEXICO

Faxes: (+525) 626 4419 / 626 4426

Salutation: Señor Procurador General/ Dear Attorney General

Attorney General of Mexico City
Lic Samuel Villar
Procurador General de México DF
Niños Héroes 61, 3er piso, Col. Doctores
Mexico DF, CP 06720
MEXICO

Faxes: (+52 5) 625 7081

Salutation: Señor Procurador / Dear Attorney General

Human Rights Commission of Mexico City
Dr Luis Barreda Solórzano
Presidente de la CEDHDF
Av. Chapultepec 49, Col. Centro
México DF, CP 06040
MEXICO

Fax: (+525) 687 7199

Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.

COPIES TO:

Human Rights organization
Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez"
Serapio Rendón 57-B, Col. San Rafael
México DF., CP 06470
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 18 October 1999.