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UA 167/07 **Fear for safety/Death threats**

MEXICO **Maria Luisa García Andrade (f), aged 28, human rights defender**
Marisela Ortíz Rivera (f), human rights defender
Members of *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* (Our daughters return home)
Members of the *Asociación Nacional de Abogados Democráticos* (ANAD), National Association of Democratic Lawyers

Members of an organisation set up to fight for justice for women abducted and murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state, and lawyers working with them, have been threatened and harassed, apparently because of their work.

MariaLuisa García Andrade and Marisela Ortíz Rivera are members of *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* (Our daughters return home). Since 10 June, they, and lawyers of the *Asociación Nacional de Abogados Democráticos* (ANAD), National Association of Democratic Lawyers, have been receiving emails with insults, death threats and warnings to stop their human rights work. On 22 June, Marisela Ortíz received a text message on her mobile phone saying: *disfruta de la vida mientras puedas* ("enjoy your life while you can"). On 10 June, an ANAD lawyer received a message reading *Tu serás eliminada* ("You will be eliminated.")

The offices of *Nuestra Hijas de Regreso Casa* in Ciudad Juárez office have reportedly been broken into three times since October 2006. Cars belonging to members of the organisation and ANAD lawyers have also been broken into three times. Documents and confidential material were reportedly stolen on several occasions. The latest incident happened on 20 June, when Maria Luisa García's car was broken into and documents relating to the 2001 murder of her sister, Lilia Alejandra Garcia Andrade (see *Mexico: Intolerable killings*, AMR 41/027/2003) were stolen. When she reported the theft to the Chihuahua State Public Prosecutor's Office (*Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado*, PGJE), one of the officials reportedly said, *ya me enteré que nos volvieron a denunciar, porque no dejan las cosas por la paz, total mañana apareces muerta, o yo muerto!* ("I found out that you've complained about us again, why don't you let things be? Either you'll turn up dead tomorrow or I will!"), presumably in reference to other complaints made by *Nuestras Hijas* about the failure of the PGJE to investigate previous incidents.

Marisela Ortíz has suffered serious intimidation before now because of her work. On 24 October 2003 armed men stopped her car. They pointed a gun at her head and in her mouth and said, *ahora vas a conocer lo que sufren las muertas de Juárez* ("Now you're going to find out what happens to the women killed in Juarez.") They also threatened her daughters, who were in the car with her and then let them go, but followed them in the car. The authorities have so far made no progress in finding the perpetrators.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over 400 women and girls have been murdered in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua City since 1993. Approximately one in three of these murders involved some form of sexual violence. Despite national and international concern at the pattern of violence against women and the impunity enjoyed by the killers, the murders are continuing. In 2003, Amnesty International released a report (*Mexico: Intolerable killings*) highlighting the pattern of violence against women in these two cities and the systematic failure of the authorities to effectively prevent and punish these crimes. A new state government in Chihuahua took some measures to improve investigation, but many perpetrators have not been brought to justice and those responsible for the systematic failure of investigations have not been held to account.

Members of organisations such as *Nuestras Hijas* and ANAD have been at the forefront of the campaign for truth and justice for the women abducted and murdered in Ciudad Juárez, and have presented a number of cases before the Inter American Commission on Human Rights. Human rights organisations working on the issue have been repeatedly accused of damaging the image of Ciudad Juarez, and seriously harassed.

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

- expressing concern at the recent intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders working on cases of abducted and murdered women in Ciudad Juarez, particularly Maria Luisa García and Marisela Ortíz of *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* and lawyers of ANAD;

- calling on the authorities to ensure that they receive protection, in accordance with their wishes;
- calling for a thorough and impartial investigation into the email and text message threats sent to members of *Nuestras Hijas* and ANAD over the past few weeks, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to investigate seriously the break-ins and the thefts of confidential material suffered by members of *Nuestras Hijas* and ANAD;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Interior Minister

Lic. Francisco Javier Ramírez Acuña
Secretario de Gobernación, Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc
México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 5093 3414

Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Minister

Governor of Chihuahua State

Lic. José Reyes Baeza Terrazas
Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua
Palacio de Gobierno, piso 1, C. Aldama #901, Col. Centro
Chihuahua, Estado de Chihuahua, C.P. 31000, MEXICO

Fax: +52 614 4293300 ext. 11066

Email: oacosta@chihuahua.gob.mx (secretary of the Governor)

Salutation: Dear Governor/Señor Gobernador

Chihuahua State Public Prosecutor

Patricia González Rodríguez
Procuradora del Estado de Chihuahua, Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado
Vicente Guerrero 616, Col. Centro, Chihuahua 31000, Estado de Chihuahua, MEXICO

Fax: +52 614 415 0314

E-mail: pagonzale@buzon.chihuahua.mx

Salutation: Dear Public Prosecutor/ Señora Procuradora General

COPIES TO:

President of the National Human Rights Commission

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández, Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos
Periférico Sur 3469, 5º piso, Col. San Jerónimo Lídice, México D.F. 10200, MEXICO

Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa

Email: nuestrashijas@gmail.com

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 8 August 2007.*****