

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety / Death Threats

24 October 2000

MEXICO

Jaime Avilés, journalist

A journalist with the leading national newspaper *La Jornada* has received a death threat after writing a strong criticism of the Tabasco state governor from the ruling PRI party.

Journalist Jaime Avilés received the threat by e-mail on the evening of 21 October. The message warned him: "Can you count? Well you can learn by counting the minutes before you die" ("*¿Sabes contar? Pues aprende contando los minutos que te quedan de vida*").

Earlier that day *La Jornada* had published an article in which he made extensive allegations of corruption against the Governor of the southeastern state of Tabasco, Roberto Madrazo Pintado.

The message was signed "Bob Big", suggesting whoever sent it had been intercepting Jaime Avilés's e-mail: a few days before he had written to a trusted friend that he was "in the land of Bob Big Hit" ("*en el [sic] tierra de Bob Big Hit*"), a play on the English meaning of Governor Roberto Madrazo's name.

Jaime Avilés had received another e-mail threat in May this year, after he wrote a series of articles about government repression of indigenous communities in Chiapas state. The message read: "You piece of shit son of a bitch, this is the first and last time we're going to warn you to stop fucking about. We know where you are and we're going to kick your head in" ("*Mariguano hijo de tu putérrima madre, esta es la primera y última llamada que te hacemos para que dejes de estar chingando. Tenemos localizados todos tus movimientos y te vamos a partir la madre en el momento indicado*").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mexican journalists often face attacks and death threats because of their work, and many live in fear of reprisals from people or organisations they have written about. The authorities rarely investigate these cases effectively, leaving the perpetrators to repeat their crimes.

After running Mexico for 71 years, the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, Party of the Institutional Revolution) has begun to lose its grip on power. Tabasco governor Roberto Madrazo was the PRI candidate for president in the election held earlier this year. He was defeated, and the party will shortly hand over power to the opposition.

Under the law he was obliged to stand down after a single term as governor of Tabasco, a traditional PRI stronghold. His PRI successor won the state election on 15 October, amid widespread allegations of fraud. There were also reports that potential opposition voters were intimidated at polling stations by groups armed with sticks, shovels and clubs. The leader of an organisation of Tabascan families living in Mexico City, which exposed electoral fraud, has received death threats. Roberto Madrazo has been accused of managing the fraud in Tabasco in attempts to bolster his bid to lead the PRI.

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

- expressing concern about the death threat received by Jaime Avilés, journalist with *La Jornada*, on 21 October 2000;
- calling on the authorities to protect Jaime Avilés, taking what action the journalist himself thinks appropriate;
- calling for an immediate, full and impartial investigation into the death threat, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- citing the September 1998 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recommendation that the Mexican authorities "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..." (Report on the situation of Human Rights in Mexico, OEA/Ser.L/V/II.100, paragraph 671).

APPEALS TO: If someone picks up the phone, for a fax tone please ask: "el tono de fax, por favor".

Minister of the Interior
Lic. Diódoro Carrasco Altamirano
Secretario de Gobernación
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso
Col. Juárez
México D.F.06699 MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México

Faxes: +52 5 546 5350

Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Minister

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

Telegram: Procurador General República, México D.F., México

Faxes: + 52 5 346 0906

E-mail: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Procurador General/ Dear Attorney General

President of the National Human Rights Commission
Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández
Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)
Periférico Sur 3469, 5º piso
Col. San Jerónimo Lídice
México DF 10200
MEXICO

Telegrams: Presidente CNDH, DF, México

Faxes: + 52 5 135 0595

Salutation: Sr Presidente / Dear Mr President

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Human Rights organization
Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C.
Serapio Rendon 57-B
Col. San Rafael
México D.F. 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 5 December 2000.