

URGENT ACTION

THREE ARRESTED UNLAWFULLY BY ARMY

The army arrested three people in northern Mexico, for reasons unclear, on 29 December. Their fate and whereabouts are unknown and they may have been subjected to enforced disappearance. Human rights defenders working on their behalf may also be at risk, as another activist working on abuses by the military was murdered on 3 January.

On 29 December, 10 soldiers were seen arresting Jose Ángel Alvarado Herrera, who was visiting relatives at their home in the town of Buenaventura, Chihuahua state, and also his cousin Nitza Paola Alvarado Espinoza. That day soldiers also arrested 18-year-old Rocío Irene Alvarado Reyes, at her home in Buenaventura. Nitza Paola Alvarado is partially paralysed and needs regular medication. The soldiers did not show any arrest warrant and the three have not been seen since.

When their relatives filed a complaint with the Chihuahua State Attorney General's Office in Buenaventura, an official told them that the military had carried out a raid in the area to detain criminal suspects and that the three were being held by the military. However, a spokesman for the Joint Anti-Crime Police and Military Operation in Chihuahua (*Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua*), denied that the army was holding them.

Their relatives sought help from three human rights organizations: the *Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres* and the *Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, both based in Chihuahua city, and the *Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte*, based in Ciudad Juárez. Amnesty International believes the members of these organizations may be at risk of intimidation and attacks, especially since the killing of human rights activist Josefina Reyes on 3 January (see UA 01/10, AMR 41/005/2010).

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to find out what has happened to Jose Ángel Alvarado Herrera, Nitza Paola Alvarado Espinoza and Rocío Irene Alvarado Reyes;
- Urging them to either formally charge them with a recognizably criminal offence or release them;
- Urging them to protect the three from torture or other ill-treatment, and to ensure they have access to independent lawyers, their families and any medical attention they may require, especially Nitza Paola Alvarado;
- Asking them to order an impartial civilian investigation into this arbitrary detention;
- Urging them to ensure that members of *Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres*, the *Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, and the *Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte* receive immediate and effective protection, in accordance with their wishes.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 FEBRUARY 2009 TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso,
Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc,
México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO
Fax: +52 55 5093 3414
E-mail: secretario@segob.gob.mx
Salutation: Señor Secretario/
Dear Minister

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Arturo Chávez Chávez
Procuraduría General de la República
Av. Paseo de la Reforma nº 211-213,
Col. Cuauhtémoc, Del. Cuauhtémoc
México D.F., C.P. 06500, MEXICO
Fax: +52 55 5346 0908
Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Señor Procurador General

Ministry of Defence

Gral. Guillermo Galván Galván
Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional
Blvd. Manuel Ávila Camacho s/n, esq.
Av. Industria Militar, Col. Lomas de
Sotelo, Del. Miguel Hidalgo, México
D.F., C.P. 11640, MÉXICO
Fax: +52 55 53952935
Salutation: Señor Secretario/
Dear Minister

Also send copies to Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres , Av. Juarez no. 4107/B, Chihuahua, Chih., Mexico, Email:

cedehm@prodigy.net.mx, and to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2007, violence linked to organized crime has spiralled in Mexico: the media reported more than 6500 drug cartel-related killings in 2009, the majority of them in Chihuahua state. President Calderón's administration deployed 50,000 troops to combat organized crime in the worst affected areas, particularly Ciudad Juárez. This has resulted in increasing reports of human rights violations committed by the military carrying out policing operations, including enforced disappearances, unlawful killings and torture. In November 2009 Amnesty International issued a report, *Mexico: New reports of human rights violations by the military*, AMR 41/058/2009 documenting cases of enforced disappearance in Ciudad Juárez in which the military continue to deny involvement despite compelling evidence. These cases are routinely investigated and tried by the military justice system, which does not guarantee an impartial and independent investigation, resulting in impunity for the vast majority of perpetrators. As a result victims and their relatives are denied an effective recourse to justice, and military officials are aware that they are extremely unlikely to be held to account.

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