

URGENT ACTION

MIGRANT SHELTER WORKERS THREATENED

A migrants' rights defender received a series of threatening phone calls from an individual claiming to be part of a major drug cartel who threatened him with extortion. The defender and his colleagues from a migrants shelter in Tabasco state, south east Mexico, had been recently working on a number of cases of mass kidnappings and sexual violence of migrants in the region.

On 14 November migrants' rights defender **Fray Aurelio Montero Vásquez** received a threatening phone call from a man who claimed to be the commander of a major drug cartel. At the time of the call he was in an emergency meeting with federal investigation authorities discussing recent incidents of kidnappings and sexual violence of migrants in the region close to Tenosique, Tabasco state. Fray Aurelio Montero Vásquez passed his telephone to a police chief from the Federal Attorney General's Office, so that he could listen to the phone call. According to the migrants' rights defenders, the caller, thinking he was still talking to Fray Aurelio Montero Vásquez, said "you have gone too far" and demanded 50,000 Mexican pesos or he would attack him. During the meeting the same caller phoned eight times and the authorities were able to track the call to a northern part of Mexico.

These threatening phone call occurred the same day that Fray Aurelio Montero Vásquez and other colleagues from La 72 migrants shelter in Tenosique, Tabasco state, had presented a legal complaint for the kidnapping of migrants. During the weeks prior, Fray Aurelio Montero Vásquez and other colleagues had reported a spike in the number of cases involving kidnappings and sexual violence against migrants, mostly coming from Central America. **Fray Tomás González**, also a migrants' rights defender working in La 72, has also been working closely on these cases and had reported security incidents to federal authorities in recent weeks.

On 16 November, the state police that protect La 72 failed to properly patrol the area and left the shelter unprotected for a number of hours in the middle of the night and early morning. These police patrols are part of the protection measures provided by the government so that they can continue their work as human rights defenders.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to ensure a prompt, full and impartial investigation into the threats against Fray Aurelio Montero Vasquez and other members of La 72, and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- Urging the authorities to immediately improve the protection provided to the La 72 migrants shelter and the surrounding area in Tenosique in relation to the wave of crimes reported by the shelter.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JANUARY 2016 TO:

Minister of the Interior

Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, col. Juárez, Cuauhtémoc
Distrito Federal, México, C.P. 06600
Fax: +52 55 5093 3414
Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx
**Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr.
Secretario**

Tabasco State Attorney General

Fernando Valenzuela Pernas
Av. Paseo Usumacinta No. 802 Col. Gil y
Sáenz (antes El Águila). Villahermosa,
Tabasco, Mexico
Email: procurador@pjtabasco.gob.mx
Fax: +52 993 313 6550 (request "tono de
fax por favor?")
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Sr.
Fiscal General**

And copies to:

[La 72 Migrants Shelter](mailto:La72.direccion@gmail.com)
La72.direccion@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has issued Urgent Actions on the work of la 72 migrant shelter in the past, see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR41/017/2014/en/>.

Human rights defenders and journalists in Mexico often face attacks, threats, intimidation, abduction and killing in reprisal for their legitimate and vital work. Those behind the attacks are almost never brought to justice. The federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists continues to face problems in providing effective protection for human rights defenders. The Mechanisms lack political, financial and human resources, and there is not enough coordination among authorities at different levels. The risk analysis often disregards the specific context and theme in which the defenders work, and the measures provided are mainly of physical type. There are not clear and standardized criteria to determine and accept - or not - a defender into the protection of the Mechanism and in many cases there is a big gap between his/her inclusion in the Mechanism and the effective implementation of the measures agreed. Another challenge is the absence of a comprehensive strategy to tackle the stigmatization and discredit of human rights defenders. The Prevention, Monitoring and Analysis Unit was created this year three years after the establishment of the Mechanism. The federal government has so far failed to respond convincingly to this prevailing climate of hostility to defenders and journalists in several states.

Migrants that pass through Mexico continue to be extremely vulnerable to grave abuses including mass kidnappings, extortion, disappearances, and other abuses by armed gangs as well as state agents. The flow of migrants from Central America continues to be significant and in recent years there is evidence that migrants are increasingly leaving their countries of origin due to violence in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, and many are in need of international protection. Despite this, Mexico has a very low rate of granting asylum. According to the national refugee authority in Mexico (COMAR), from September 2014 to June 2015, 1,967 refugee applications were received and just 293 (15 per cent) were granted refugee status and 46 with complementary protection (information published in the Third Report of the Mexican Government presented by President Enrique Peña Nieto to Congress on 2 September 2015, available at: <http://www.presidencia.gob.mx/tercerinforme/>).

In July 2014 President Enrique Peña Nieto announced the "Southern Border Plan" with the stated aim of increasing security and development on Mexico's southern border and improving the human rights of migrants. Since the announcement of the plan, Amnesty has received complaints of heavy-handed security operations. Deportations of Central Americans have risen (107,814 in 2014 so far, in comparison to 80,079 in 2013). In addition, police and immigration agents are forcing migrants off the cargo trains that traditionally were used on their route to the United States. This implies that migrants now take new clandestine routes in their way to the United States which are often controlled by criminal groups.

Name: Fray Aurelio Montero Vásquez (m) and Fray Tomás González (m)
Gender m/f: m

UA: 268/15 Index: AMR 41/2941/2015 Issue Date: 26 November 2015