

**MEXICOSaúl Gerardo SIFUENTES RAMIREZ, human rights defender**

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Human rights defender Saúl Gerardo Sifuentes Ramírez and his family have been intimidated, only days after the organization he works for filed an official complaint about police ill-treatment. Amnesty International fears for their safety.

Saúl Sifuentes is a member of the *Comité de Derechos Humanos Juan Gerardi*, Juan Gerardi Human Rights Committee, in the city of Torreón, Coahuila state in northern Mexico. On 30 March the organization sent a complaint signed by Saúl Sifuentes to the Torreón Municipal President. The complaint denounced an incident on 28 March, when police from the *Dirección de Seguridad Pública Municipal*, Municipal Branch of Public Security, reportedly beat a group of *lavacoches*, poor people washing cars for a living, in an attempt to disperse them.

The day after the complaint was made, two unknown persons came to Saúl Sifuentes' home, where they told his family that they wanted to "sort out an issue" ("*arreglar un asunto*") with Saúl. Since then, they have come to the house on several occasions, but always when Saúl Sifuentes has been out. They have appeared aggressive, and have not said who they are or why they have been calling at the house.

The Juan Gerardi Human Rights Committee has previously complained to the state authorities about the police's treatment of the *lavacoches*, who have apparently been receiving death threats from the police. The authorities are not known to have taken any steps to investigate the threats.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Human rights defenders make a vital contribution to strengthening the rule of law, civil society and the development of institutions to protect human rights. However, in Mexico those who struggle to defend the rights of others have often been the first to come under attack, and to have their own rights violated and their safety threatened. Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the pressure put on human rights defenders to stop their legitimate activities, and fears that those behind the harassment may resort to ever more violent means of applying pressure on human rights activists.

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

- expressing concern that human rights defender Saúl Gerardo Sifuentes Ramírez and his family were intimidated immediately after he filed a complaint about the Torreón municipal police;
- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Saúl Sifuentes, his family and other members of the Juan Gerardi Human Rights Committee;
- calling for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the harassment, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties.

**APPEALS TO: (If a voice answers, please say "el tono de fax, por favor")**

Governor of Coahuila

Enrique Martínez Martínez  
Gobernador del Estado de Coahuila  
Palacio de Gobierno  
Zaragoza y Ocampo  
Saltillo, Coahuila 25008  
MÉXICO

**Telegram: Gobernador, Coahuila, Mexico**

**Fax: + 52 84 147946**

**Salutation: Dear Governor / Señor Gobernador**

Attorney General of Coahuila

Lic. Oscar Calderón Sánchez  
Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Coahuila  
Carretera Saltillo - Torreón Km 2.5  
Saltillo, Coahuila 25000  
MÉXICO

**Telegram: Procurador, Coahuila, México**

**Fax: + 52 84 340 991 / 340 870**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Señor Procurador**

Municipal President of Torreón

Lic. Salomón Juan Marquez Issa  
Presidente Municipal de Torreón  
Avda Matamoros y Calle Galeana  
Torreón, Coahuila 27000  
MÉXICO

**Telegram: Municipal President, Torreón, México**

**Fax: + 52 17 292 376**

**Salutation: Dear President / Señor Presidente**

**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 16 May 2001.