

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/43/96

UA 200/96

Death threats / Fear for safety

13 August 1996

**MEXICO** Pilar Noriega (f), lawyer

**Digna Ochoa (f), lawyer**

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On 10 August 1996 Pilar Noriega and Digna Ochoa, lawyers and members of the non-governmental human rights organization *Centro de Derechos Humanos Agustín Pro-Juárez (PRODH)*, Human Rights Centre Agustín Pro-Juárez, received death threats in two communications left in PRODH's offices:

*"Que se mueran todos los PRODH cabrones, y empezamos por ese par de hijas de puta, que como chingan la madre!, nos referimos a sus dos abogadas valientes que ya veremos, todo puede pasar; las tenemos ubicadas en este instante. Sabemos sus estrategias, quien sabe si vivan para contar lo que les pasa a las valientes".*

*"Death to all those bloody PRODH supporters; lets begin with those two bloody bitches, who are a pain in the neck! We are referring to your two brave lawyers, we'll see, anything can happen; we know where they are at this moment. We know their strategies, who knows if these two brave women will live to tell what happens to them".*

The threats, made anonymously, are believed to be a result of the lawyers' work for a group of detainees accused of being members of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)*, Zapatista National Liberation Army, an armed opposition group. All of the detainees have been tortured to extract confessions (see below). Their case is being reviewed in court this week.

The threats against Pilar Noriega and Digna Ochoa, who are also members of the *Frente Nacional de Abogados Democráticos, (FNAD)*, National Front of Democratic Lawyers, follow systematic harassment and threats against other PRODH members in recent months, apparently with the aim of undermining the Centre's efforts to defend human rights. The Jesuit order, which founded PRODH, has for a long time been the target of a smear campaign, in which its members have been falsely accused of involvement in guerrilla activities.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The case in which both lawyers are working is the defence of the seven people, including two women, detained in the town of Yanga, state of Veracruz, on 8 February 1995, and another eight, including four women and one minor, on 9 February 1995 in Cacalomacán, state of Mexico. All are accused of belonging to EZLN. An Amnesty International delegation which visited them in November 1995 documented extensive use of torture. The organization considers the defendants to be prisoners of conscience (see *Overcoming fear: human rights violations against women in Mexico*, AMR 41/09/96, March 1996).

These threats are the latest in a series of threats and attacks against members of religious orders, human rights defenders and professional groups such as lawyers, whose members have been active in promoting and protecting human rights on Mexico for decades. On 17 August 1995, Father David Fernández, the director of PRODH, also received threats (see UA 159/95, AMR 41/15/95, 5 July 1995).

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

- expressing concern at the death threats against Pilar Noriega and Digna Ochoa;

- urging the government to take immediate measures to guarantee the safety of Pilar Noriega and Digna Ochoa and of all members of the *Centro de Derechos Humanos Agustín Pro-Juárez*;
- calling for steps to be taken immediately to identify those responsible for the threats and for them to be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Minister of the Interior

Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor  
Secretario de la Gobernación  
Secretaría de la Gobernación  
Bucareli 99, 1er piso, Col. Juárez  
06699 México DF, MEXICO

**Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México D.F., México**

**Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350**

**Salutation: Sr. Secretario / Dear Minister**

2) Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Antonio Lozano Gracia  
Procurador General de la República  
Paseo de la Reforma 75  
México 06200 D.F. MEXICO

**Telegrams: Procurador General de la República, México D.F., México**

**Faxes: + 52 5 626 4478**

**Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Attorney General**

3) Attorney General of the Federal District

Lic. José Antonio González Fernández  
Procurador del Distrito Federal  
Niños Heroes 132. Col. Doctores  
México 06720 D.F. MEXICO

**Telegrams: Procurador General del Distrito Federal, México D.F., México**

**Faxes: + 52 5 625 7081**

**Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Attorney General**

**COPIES TO:**

1) Centro de DD.HH.

Miguel Agustín Pro-Juárez (PRODH)  
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2) daily newspaper

Sr. Editor  
La Jornada  
Balderas 68  
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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 25 September 1996.