

PUBLIC

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UA 208/07 Fear for safety

MEXICO **Alberto Fernández Portilla (m), journalist**
Daniel Pérez Espinoza (m), journalist
Edwin Meneses Santiago (m), journalist

Journalist Alberto Fernández Portilla was shot and wounded by a non-identified individual on 5 August as he arrived at his home in Oaxaca. His colleagues Daniel Pérez Espinoza and Edwin Meneses Santiago have recently received death threats. Amnesty International believes that all three are in grave danger.

On 5 August, at around 1.30am, when Alberto Fernández Portilla was on his way home, a man ran towards him with a pistol, shouting, "So that you do not forget my leader" (*pa' que te acuerdes de mi lider*) and fired three times, hitting him in the abdomen, left leg and right arm. His family managed to take him to hospital, where he is recovering.

Daniel Pérez Espinoza and Edwin Meneses Santiago reportedly started to receive death threats after this. Both have received several threatening phone calls saying things like, "You are the next, we are not going to fail this time." (*el que sigue vas a ser tu, contigo no vamos a fallar*).

The three journalists believe that all this may be related to their recent radio and press reports on drug-trafficking in the streets (*narco-menudeo*), allegations of stealing of oil from the Mexican oil company pipelines and reports of corruption in the union representing workers at the oil company. Alberto Fernández Portilla is the director of the Oaxacan newspaper *Semanario del Istmo* and producer of the news programme *BBM Noticia* on the radio station *Radorama-XEKZ*.

Three police officers are guarding Alberto Fernández in hospital, to protect him from further attacks, and his case is now being investigated by the Oaxaca public prosecutor's office and the Federal Public Minister. On 8 August Edwin Meneses filed a complaint with the Oaxaca public prosecutor's office, asking them to investigate the death threats he has received, and Daniel Pérez plans to do the same soon.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2006 widespread protests erupted in the state of Oaxaca, led by the social movement APPO, in an unsuccessful campaign to force the state governor to resign. Political violence and demonstrations continued throughout the year, with several media outlets being occupied, and journalists attacked and threatened, by armed civilians linked to the local government and police as well as APPO supporters. While the political violence has declined, tensions remain high.

During the political crisis media workers came under attack from both sides. One journalist, Bradley Will, was killed (see Further Information on UA 227/06, AMR 41/050/2006, 31 October August 2006), and several others were attacked and threatened. Those responsible have not been held to account. On 12 June journalist Misael Sánchez Sarmiento, who writes for the Oaxacan newspaper *Tiempo*, was shot and wounded (see Further Information on UA 151/07, AMR 41/026/2007, 15 June 2007).

Nationwide, Mexico has seen an escalation in violence against journalists, with at least 11 killed since the beginning of 2006 and several abducted. The federal authorities established the Office of Special Prosecutor on Crimes against Journalists (*Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos Cometidos contra Periodistas*) in February 2006 to improve investigation of such cases. However, there is almost total impunity for such crimes, as the Special Federal Prosecutor has failed to ensure successful prosecutions in any of the more than 100 cases under investigation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern that Alberto Fernández Portilla was shot and wounded on 5 August in Oaxaca State;
- expressing concern that his colleagues Daniel Pérez Espinoza and Edwin Meneses Santiago have received death threats;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Alberto Fernández Portilla, Daniel Pérez Espinoza and Edwin Meneses Santiago receive protection measures to guarantee their safety in accordance with their wishes;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation by the federal authorities into the attack on Alberto Fernández Portilla and death threats against Daniel Pérez Espinoza and Edwin Meneses Santiago;
- reminding the authorities of their duty to ensure those responsible for attacks on journalists are held to account in order to prevent future attacks and create a climate in which journalists can exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisal.

APPEALS TO:

Special Federal Prosecutor on Crimes against Journalists

Lic. Octavio Alberto Orellana Wiarco

Fiscal Especial para la Atención de Delitos Cometidos contra Periodistas

Procuraduría General de la República
Av. Paseo de la Reforma #211-213
Col. Cuauhtémoc, Del. Cuauhtémoc, C.P. 06500, México D.F., MEXICO
Fax: +52 55 53 46 09 08
Salutation: Dear Sir/Señor Fiscal Especial

Governor of Oaxaca

Lic. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz
Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca
Carretera Oaxaca-Puerto Angel, Km. 9.5, Santa María Coyotepec, Oaxaca, Oaxaca C. P. 71254, MEXIC
Fax: +52 951 502 0530 (if a voice answers, ask "tono de fax, por favor")
E-mail: gobernador@oaxaca.gob.mx
Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor

Attorney General of Oaxaca

Lic. Evencio Nicolás Martínez Ramírez
Procurador del Estado de Oaxaca
Avenida Luis Echeverría s/n, Col. La Experimental, San Antonio de la Cal, Oaxaca, Oaxaca 71236, MEXICO
Fax: +52 951 511 5519
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Procurador

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Francisco Javier Ramírez Acuña
Secretario de Gobernación, Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc, México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO
Fax: +52 55 5093 3414
Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

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 D.F. 10200, 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 20 September 2007.*****