

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER THREATENED

Human rights lawyer Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson has been threatened with death because of his work in charge of the Ciudad Juárez office of the Chihuahua State Human Rights Commission (CEDH), in northern Mexico.

On his way home from work in Ciudad Juárez on 4 September, he stopped at a traffic light. A car pulled up beside him; the driver lowered the window, made a gun shape with his hand and pretended to shoot him, saying, "Quieten down or we are going to kill you," (*Ya bájale porque te vamos a matar*), and drove off. Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson asked the CEDH to provide protection, but they refused, and he has been forced to seek safety over the border in the town of El Paso, USA.

Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson has been in charge of the Ciudad Juárez office of the Chihuahua CEDH since April 2008. He has been one of the few officials to publicly recognise that there has been a large increase in the number of complaints of serious human rights violations, including torture and extrajudicial executions in Ciudad Juárez, by the armed forces carrying out police duties. The CEDH has only limited powers to receive such complaints, but as other institutions have failed to take action the Ciudad Juárez CEDH office has undertaken to accept complaints, publicly criticise military abuses and press the appropriate authorities to respond. This has led to severe criticism from the local military commander. The president of the CEDH based in Chihuahua City has ordered Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson to stop receiving complaints from victims of alleged abuses by the military and refused to support his request for protection. According to Gustavo de la Rosa, the CEDH has also told him that he will lose his job if he does not return to work by 6 October.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to provide Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson and his family with protection in line with his wishes so that he can continue his vital work in Ciudad Juárez;
- Calling on them to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the threats against Gustavo de la Rosa, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on the Chihuahua State Human Rights Commission to assist in improving his security and support his work receiving complaints from victims of abuses by military personnel.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of Interior
 Secretario de Gobernación
 Bucareli 99, 1er piso
 Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc
 México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 5093 3414

Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Secretario/

Dear Minister

Governor of Chihuahua State
 Lic. José Reyes Baeza Terrazas
 Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua,
 Palacio de Gobierno, 1er piso, C.
 Aldama #901, Col. Centro,
 Chihuahua, Estado de Chihuahua, C.P.
 31000, Mexico

Fax: +52 614 429 3300 (then dial extension 11066 when prompted)

Salutation: Señor Gobernador/

Dear Governor

Chihuahua Human Rights Commission

Lic. José Luis Armendáriz González
 Presidente de la Comisión Estatal
 de Derechos Humanos de
 Chihuahua

Calle Décima y Mina, 1000, Col.
 Centro, C.P. 31000, Chihuahua,
 MEXICO

Fax: +52 614 410 0828

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2007, violence linked to organized crime has spiralled in Mexico: the media have reported more than 14,000 drug cartel related killings. The majority of these murders have occurred in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state. President Calderón's administration has attempted to combat the drug cartels by deploying thousands of federal police and over 45,000 military personnel in the worst affected areas, particularly Ciudad Juárez. However this has not resulted in a reduction in violence. According to the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), reports of abuses by the military, including unlawful killings, torture, arbitrary detentions and illegal house searches increased six-fold between 2006 and 2008. 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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