

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

22 January 1997

**MEXICO** Laura Berenice Medina Bocanegra (f), aged 31, community activist  
**Luis Fernando Flores Medina, aged 11, her son**

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On 17 January 1997 Laura Berenice Medina Bocanegra, a community activist from Tepoztlan, was followed by two men as she went to her workplace in the nearby town of Cuernavaca, Morelos state. She has identified the men as the same two members of the security forces who had followed and attacked her on 12 July 1996, as a result of which she was hospitalized. She now greatly fears for her life and has decided to leave Tepoztlan.

Laura Berenice Medina Bocanegra has been subjected to continuous threats and intimidation, apparently because of her work on behalf of the Tepoztlan community. She has been very active in committees and public meetings and has been outspoken about gross human rights violations committed by government forces.

The incident on 17 January is the latest in a series of similar occurrences where she has been subjected to harassment or followed. On at least one occasion the number plate of one of the two cars following her was identified as a patrol car of the *Policía Judicial del Estado, (PJE)*, State Judicial Police. Despite formal complaints of the harassment and threats, nobody has been brought to justice.

Although she has now directly contacted her family and Amnesty International, she remains in a secret location as she fears for her own life and that of her 11-year-old son, Luis Fernando Flores Medina, who is still in Tepoztlan with Laura's mother. The latter (as well as other members of the family) is also a community activist and leading member of *Comité de Unidad Tepozteca (CUT)*, Committee of Tepoztecan Unity, an indigenous peasant organization.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The state of Morelos has long been the scene of human rights violations allegedly carried out by the security forces, mainly in the context of land disputes. Indigenous people and peasants are most often the victims of this violence.

A development company, in association with the governor of Morelos, Jorge Carrillo Olea, has been attempting to build a multi-million dollar golf course and houses on common land, land which is regarded by the inhabitants of Tepoztlan as sacred. For months, local people, including women, children and elderly, some of them members of the CUT, have organized numerous peaceful actions in their struggle to stop the development. Such campaigning has led to a series of human rights violations including extrajudicial executions, torture, and ill-treatment.

On 10 April 1996, following one of the peaceful demonstrations, Marcos Olmedo Gutiérrez was extrajudicially killed by members of the security forces. More than a hundred arrest warrants were issued against members of CUT and some arrests took place. Moreover, community activists, including minors, were repeatedly subjected to threats and ill-treatment. One of those previously arrested, Gerardo Demesa Padilla, a teacher, remains in prison as a prisoner of conscience. Three other community activists, Laurencio Guarneros Sandoval, Remigio Ayala Martínez and Carlos Ricardo Ruiz Canada also remain in prison as prisoners of conscience (see UA 14/97, AMR 41/01/97, 15 January 1997).

A fifth person, Julio Bello Palacios (16), arrested on 11 January has now been released, although Amnesty International is seeking further details about his torture.

Amnesty International delegations visited Tepoztlan in June and December 1996 and were able to interview Laura Berenice Medina Bocanegra, among others human rights defenders, community activists and members of CUT who had been ill-treated, threatened and imprisoned. The delegation confirmed the reports of human rights violations against those active in promoting and protecting human rights. For further information, see chapter on Mexico in Human Rights Defenders on the Front Line (AMR 02/01/96).

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

- expressing deep concern that Laura Berenice Medina Bocanegra has been repeatedly threatened and harassed by members of the security forces apparently in connection with her work on behalf of the Tepoztlan community;
- calling for immediate and effective steps to guarantee her safety and that of her relatives and her secure return to Tepoztlan;
- calling for an impartial and independent investigation to be carried out into the harassment and threats, for the findings to be made public and for anyone responsible to be brought to justice;

**if possible, also:**

- call for immediate practical measures to address the widespread human rights violations against community activists and human rights defenders in Mexico in line with governmental commitments under International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- ask to be kept informed of these measures.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Attorney General of the Republic  
 Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuellar  
 Procuraduría General de la República  
 Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta  
 Col. Guerrero  
 06300 México D.F., MEXICO

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

**Fax: (+52 5) 626 4419/4430**

**Salutation: Sr. Procurador de la República/Dear Attorney**

2) Governor of the State of Morelos

Governor of the state of Morelos  
 Lic. Jorge Carrillo Olea  
 Gobernador del Estado de Morelos  
 Palacio de Gobierno Cuernavaca  
 Estado de Morelos, MEXICO

**Fax: 52 73 11 3020** (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

**Telegrams: Gobernador Morelos, Mexico**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

1) Daily newspaper  
 Sr. Editor, La Jornada

Balderas 68, 06050 México D.F., MEXICO

2) Human rights organization

Sres., Centro de Derechos Humanos

Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez, AC

CP 06700, Mexico D.F., Mexico, MEXICO

**E-mail: [prodh@laneta.apc.org](mailto:prodh@laneta.apc.org)**

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 15 March 1997.