

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE RAIDED IN MEXICO

The offices of Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre, in Torreón, Coahuila, in north-eastern Mexico have been raided by military and police personnel. The Human Rights Defenders working there may be at risk of further harassment.

On the evening of 9 February, members of the military as well as federal and Coahuila state police arrived in around five cars at the offices of a Catholic human rights organization based in a local church, **Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre** (Centro de Derechos Humanos Juan Gerardi) in San Judas Tadeo parish, Torreón. Security force agents entered the office without a warrant and began to question two staff working there about their activities. The human rights activists answered the questions and asked for an explanation for the raid. The security force agents replied that they were looking for drugs on an anonymous tip-off.

When staff suggested that the security agents needed to ask permission before searching the terrace, a soldier told them: "Do you think we go about asking permission..." (Imagínese que andemos pidiendo permiso...). The soldiers and police continued to search the premises and interrogated the staff, asking if one of them was a lawyer and questioning why a human rights centre would be in a Catholic church. The officials did not find anything and when they left, the human rights defenders saw dozens of soldiers and police outside the building.

The Juan Gerardi human rights centre has now filed formal complaints with the Attorney General of the Republic (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR), Coahuila State Attorney (Fiscalía del Estado de Coahuila), and has requested precautionary measures (medidas cautelares) from the National Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de México, CNDH) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, CIDH). A military official told the centre that the raid was a mistake but failed to explain how or why the premises were raided. Amnesty International is concerned that the raid may be harassment for the work carried out documenting human rights violations and is concerned that staff may face further harassment.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urge the authorities to guarantee the safety of the staff of Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre and implement protection measures requested by the centre;
- Demand that the civilian authorities carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the raid and the circumstances which led to it and ensure that property searches are carried out on the basis of legally obtained search warrants;
- Call on the authorities to ensure that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals and remind the authorities that

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 MARCH 2012 TO:

Attorney General of the Republic
Marisela Morales Ibáñez
Av. Paseo de la Reforma 211-213
Col. Cuauhtémoc, Del. Cuauhtémoc
México D.F., C.P. 06500
México
Fax: +52 555 346 0908 (keep trying)
Email: mmoralesi@pgr.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Governor of Coahuila State
Rubén Moreira
Palacio de Gobierno, 1er. Piso Juárez e
Hidalgo s/n, Saltillo, C.P. 25000
Coahuila
México
Fax: +52 844 411 8558
Email: s.particular@coahuila.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Governor

And copies to:

Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre
Email:
dhgerardi-direccion@yahoo.com.mx

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre is a human rights organization based on the premises of a local church with strong links to the Catholic community. It provides support for relatives and victims of human rights violations across all faiths, including women, migrants and relatives of the disappeared or abducted. Torréon is one of the cities most severely affected by fighting between drug cartels, with a heavy police and military presence, with scores of killings, abductions, detentions and raids. Victims of violence and human rights violations have virtually no one to turn to. The insecurity and violence makes the work of the Centre extremely important, but places its staff at risk of reprisals.

Name: Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre staff

Gender m/f: both

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