

PUBLIC

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22 May 2008

UA 136/08 Fear for safety

MEXICO **Luz Esthela Castro Rodríguez (f), aged 55, human rights defender
Other members of the Women's Human Rights Centre (*Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres*, CDHM)**

Human rights defender Luz Esthela Castro Rodríguez, coordinator of the Women's Human Rights Centre, (*Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres*, CDHM) in Chihuahua City, northern Mexico, has received two death threats. She and other staff working at the CDHM are in danger.

On 14 May, Luz Esthela Castro was leading a training session for a group of women victims of violence when she received two calls on her mobile phone. During both calls a male caller verbally abused her, including by saying "You and your human rights centre will get fucked, you idiot" (*te va a llevar la chingada, y a tu centro de derechos humanos, pendeja*), and threatened Luz Esthela Castro and her colleagues at the CDHM with death.

Luz Esthela Castro is also the co-founder of Justice for Our Daughters (*Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas*), an organisation that supports and campaigns for justice in the cases of women abducted and killed in Chihuahua state. On 13 May, she participated in a protest organised by *Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas*, marking the fifth anniversary of the abduction and killing of Neyra Azucena Cervantes, who was 19 years old when she died in 2003 (see her case in Amnesty International's report Mexico: *Ending the brutal cycle of violence against women in Ciudad Juárez and the city of Chihuahua*, AI Index: AMR 41/011/2004). In addition, during a local human rights forum on 27 April, Luz Esthela Castro had proposed a campaign to end the involvement of military forces in policing operations in Chihuahua state.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent months, other human rights defenders in Chihuahua state have suffered attacks and harassment, including apparently unfounded criminal charges being levelled against them. On 14 March 2008, Armando Villareal Martha, an activist working for the rights of farmers in the state, was shot and killed. Amnesty International is not aware of any advances in the investigation of this crime. On 3 April, two other local well known activists and human rights defenders, Carlos Chávez Quevedo and Cipriana Jurado Herrera, were arrested and then released on bail for participating in a street protest in 2005. Another organisation set up to fight for justice for women abducted and murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Our Daughters Return Home (*Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*) have also been threatened and harassed because of their work (see UA 167/07, AMR 41/028/2007, 28 June 2007).

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

- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the threats against Luz Esthela Castro Rodríguez on 14 May and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee Luz Esthela Castro Rodríguez's safety and that of her colleagues at the *Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres* in Chihuahua City, in accordance with their wishes;
- calling on the authorities to adhere to their obligations under the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties, which recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of Chihuahua state

Lic. José Reyes Baeza
Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua
Palacio de Gobierno, piso 1
C. Aldama #901
Col. Centro, Chihuahua, C.P. 31000
Estado de Chihuahua, MEXICO

Fax: +52 614 429 3300 ext. 11066

Salutation: Dear Governor/ Señor Gobernador

Attorney General of Chihuahua state

Patricia González Rodríguez
Procuradora del Estado de Chihuahua
Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado
Vicente Guerrero 616,
Col. Centro, Chihuahua, C.P.31000
Estado de Chihuahua, MEXICO

Fax: +52 614 415 0314

Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Señora Procuradora

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Juan Camilo Mouriño Terrazo
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

Human Rights Commission of Chihuahua

Lic. Leopoldo González Baeza
Presidente de la Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos de Chihuahua
Calle Décima y Mina, 1000
Col. Centro, Chihuahua, C.P.31000
Estado de Chihuahua, MEXICO

Fax: +52 614 410 0828 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear President/ Señor Presidente

COPIES TO:

Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, A.C., Avenida Juárez #4107, col. Centro, Chihuahua, Chih., México, Fax: 0052 614 415 4152

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 3 July 2008.