

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

MEXICO

Women and girls in Ciudad Juarez

**Killed: Alma Brisa Molina Baca (f), aged 34**

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Alma Brisa Molina Baca was abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua State, on 24 July. Her killing appears to fit the decade-long pattern of murders with sexual violence that the authorities have failed to prevent or end. Intense national and international pressure had recently reduced the number of such murders, but Amnesty International believes that this killing raises new concern for the safety of the women and girls of Ciudad Juarez.

Alma Brisa Molina Baca worked at one of the factories (*maquilas*) in Ciudad Juarez, a city in the desert on the border with the United States of America. She had reportedly told her parents she was going out dancing on 24 July. Her body was found on 27 July on waste ground in Ciudad Juarez. The autopsy reportedly found that she had been raped and strangled. Official investigations into the pattern of abductions and murders of women in Ciudad Juarez have consistently been undermined by their failure to follow leads or question witnesses, their contamination of forensic evidence and other negligence. The authorities have also denied families their right to assist (*coadyuvar*) in official investigations, and this has compounded their lack of accountability for their failure to end the abductions and murders.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International documented the murders of more than 300 women in its major report *Intolerable Killings: 10 years of abductions and murders in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua*. The organization identified at least 137 cases where sexual violence was involved: in many of these cases the victims were abducted first and suffered extreme violence. During this decade the Chihuahua State authorities systematically failed to do anything to prevent such murders, or prosecute those thought responsible, particularly in cases with a sexual component. A number of suspects have been arrested, but although many have spent years in prison only one has been convicted. The authorities have never adequately investigated widespread allegations that these men have confessed under torture, and this has further undermined the credibility of the judicial system. Relatives of both the victims and those in prison, and human rights organizations, have sought to highlight the failure to bring those responsible to justice, and the state authorities' negligence. The authorities have threatened and harassed them, and attacked them in the newspapers. According to the authorities over 30 women remain unaccounted for who have been reported missing over the last 11 years in Ciudad Juarez. This figure has yet to be corroborated.

For many years the federal authorities refused to intervene in Chihuahua, claiming that the murders were entirely a matter for the state authorities. However, in the last year, under intense national and international pressure the federal authorities finally began to investigate a number of cases and collaborate with the local authorities in investigations and measures to improve the safety of women. While this increased attention to the situation appeared to have reduced the number of murders of women, there have been virtually no tangible advances in investigations into the murders that have taken place. The murder of Alma Brisa Molina Blanca demonstrates that those responsible for many of these crimes have still to be brought to justice and that women are still particularly vulnerable to attack in Ciudad Juarez and the city of Chihuahua.

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

- expressing concern at the abduction and murder of Alma Brisa Molina Baca in Ciudad Juarez and calling for a prompt, impartial and effective investigation into her killing that will identify those responsible and bring them to justice;
- urging the authorities to ensure that the family of the victim are able to assist (*coadyuvar*) the official investigation;
- urging the state and federal authorities to ensure that all the cases of women missing or murdered in the state of Chihuahua are effectively investigated;
- calling on the state and federal authorities to take effective action to ensure that women can live free from violence in the state of Chihuahua.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor of the State of Chihuahua

Lic. Patricio Martínez  
Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua  
Aldama 901,  
Colonia Centro,  
Chihuahua, México

**Fax: + 52 614 429 3464**

**Salutation: Señor Gobernador**

Attorney General of the State of Chihuahua

Lic. Jesús Antonio Piñon Jiménez  
Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Chihuahua  
Calle Vicente Guerrero 616,  
Col. Centro,  
Chihuahua, México

**Fax: + 52 614 415 0314**

**Salutation: Señor Procurador/ Dear Prosecutor**

Subprocurator of Human Rights in the Office of the Attorney General

Dr. Mario Alvarez Ledesma  
Subprocurador de Derechos Humanos de la Procuraduría General de la República  
Paseo de la Reforma 72, Colonia Guerrero  
06030 Mexico DF

**Fax: +525 55346 4383**

**Salutation: Estimado Subprocurador/ Dear Sir**

Special Commissioner for the prevention and eradication of violence against women in Ciudad Juárez

Lic. Guadalupe Morfin Otero  
Comisión para prevenir y Eradicar la violencia contra las Mujeres en Ciudad Juárez  
Abraham González no. 50, 1er, Piso, Col. Juárez,  
CP 06600, Mexico  
MEXICO

**Email: comisionciudadjuarez@segob.gob.mx**

**Salutation: Estimada Comisionada/Dear Commissioner**

**COPIES TO:**

Mexican Comisión for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights

Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos A.C. (CMDPDH)  
Tehuantepec 155, Col. Roma Sur, Mexico DF, CP 5584 2731, Mexico

**Email: cmdpdh@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 13 September 2004.