

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/36/96

UA 174/96

Fear for safety

9 July 1996

MEXICOLiliana Flores Benavides (f), aged 41, activist
Viridiana Villareal (f), aged 17, Liliana's daughter
Nancy Rodríguez Villareal (f), aged 32, activist
Marta Rodríguez Martínez (f), aged 37, activist

There is serious concern for the safety of the members of the non-governmental organization *El Barzón* in Nuevo León state, following the discovery of a bomb in their office on 9 July 1996. It was set to explode at 1.00pm on 9 July, but it was taken away safely from the building. *El Barzón* is a non-violent legal organization of farmers, peasants and professionals working for the defence of land rights and better conditions on credits.

This incident follows a series of anonymous death threats against one of the organization's leaders, Liliana Flores Benavides, apparently as a result of her work. On 3 and 5 July 1996, Liliana Flores Benavides was followed and threatened by members of the Judicial Police, *Policía Judicial*, and the Ministry of the Interior, *Secretaría de Gobernación*. She recorded the incidents on video and also took some photographs.

The threats and acts of intimidation against Liliana Flores Benavides began in April 1996 when she received more than 23 anonymous calls against her and her family. Her daughter, Viridiana Villareal, has regularly been followed since 10 June by unidentified men in a van.

Two other members of *El Barzón*'s staff, Nancy Rodríguez Villareal and Marta Rodríguez Martínez, have also been threatened. On the night of 8 July they received anonymous phone calls, warning them "You will see if you keep on talking".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International fears for the safety of those active in promoting and protecting human rights in Mexico in view of the increasing reports of threats and harassment against them. The organization has repeatedly expressed its concerns to the Mexican authorities about the lack of safeguards provided to protect human rights activists. It believes that the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators is the main reason for the persistence of these abuses.

Other human rights activists in Nuevo León have been threatened in the past, including members of *Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos, A.C.*, CADHAC, Citizens for Human Rights (see UA 105/95, AMR 41/11/95, 3 May 1995).

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

- expressing deep concern about the attempted bombing and threats against members of *El Barzón*, apparently made as a result of their work on behalf of peasant and farmers's rights;
- calling for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats and bombing, and asking to be kept informed of developments;
- urging the government to take appropriate measures to protect Liliana Flores Benavides and her daughter, and other members of *El Barzón*, including Nancy Rodríguez Villareal and Marta Rodríguez Martínez;
- expressing deep alarm about continuing human rights violations against leaders of human rights organizations, those defending peasants and indigenous people

and the apparent lack of effective action to stop human rights violations and to end the impunity currently enjoyed by most perpetrators.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León

Presidente de la República

Palacio Nacional, 06067 México D.F., MEXICO

Telegrams: Presidente Zedillo, México D.F., México

Telexes: 170937 sppnme; 1774468 sppnme

Faxes: + 52 5 271 1764 but preferably to + 52 5 515 1794 or 542 1648 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Minister of the Interior

Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor

Secretario de la Gobernación

Secretaría de la Gobernación

Bucareli 99, 1er piso, Col. Juárez

06699 México DF, MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México D.F., México

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350

Salutation: Sr. Secretario / Dear Minister

3) Interim Governor of the state of Nuevo León

Lic. Benjamin Clariond Reyes

Gobernador Interino del estado de Nuevo León

Palacio de Gobernación

Zaragoza y 5 de mayo

Monterrey, 06400, Nuevo León, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador Clariond, Nuevo León, Mexico

Faxes: + 52 8 344 9877

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

1) Centro de DD.HH.

Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos, A.C. CADHAC

Padre Mier 617 Pte., Zona Centro,

64000 Monterrey, Nuevo León, México

Faxes +52 8 343 5058 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

2) Centro de DD.HH.

Miguel Agustín Pro-Juárez (PRODH)

Puebla No 153, Col Roma

06700 México DF, México

Faxes: + 52 5 208 7547

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 5 September 1996.