

PUBLIC

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UA 272/08 Fear for safety

MEXICO Cristina Auerbach Benavides (f), human rights defender

Cristina Auerbach Benavides, a human rights defender from Mexico City, foiled an attempt to put her life at risk. Through her work with Catholic Church organization, *Pastoral Laboral*, she has been at the forefront of the campaign to obtain justice for the families of 65 miners who died in the *Pasta de Conchos* coalmine explosion in the northern state of Coahuila in February 2006.

On 10 September, when she started her car's engine a signal on the dashboard alerted her that the pressure of the vehicle's tyres was low so she drove it straight to a mechanic's garage. The mechanic found that all the nuts of the wheels had been loosened. The mechanic was surprised that Cristina Auerbach hadn't had an accident on her way to the garage. He stated that the loosening had been done deliberately as a maintenance problem such as this could not have occurred through the normal use of the car. This incident happened while Cristina Auerbach's bodyguard, assigned to her by the Mexico City Attorney General's Office because of a previous attack, was on sick leave. Cristina Auerbach reported the incident to the authorities.

The bodyguard was assigned to Cristina Auerbach after she was attacked on 19 June 2007. That day, Cristina Auerbach had participated in a press conference organised by her organization to present the advances in the campaign to demand for justice for the victims of *Pasta de Conchos*. As she arrived home in her car, she was attacked by two men who stole the car which had documents relating to the *Pasta de Conchos* case inside. One pointed a gun at her and took her car keys and the other one hit her on the head with the edge of his hand. Before they drove off they used a radio to request permission to leave.

Fears remain for the safety of Christina Auerbach following the interference with her car on 10 September.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Pastoral Laboral has campaigned for the bodies of the miners to be recovered and alleges that the explosion was due to negligence by the company running the mine. On 4 September 2007, the office of the legal team that represents the relatives of the miners was broken into. One laptop was stolen and all the office's files had been rifled through.

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

- calling on the authorities to ensure continuous and adequate protection measures for Cristina Auerbach, in accordance with her wishes;
- calling for a thorough investigation into the apparent interference with her car and to bring those responsible to account;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without obstacles or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of 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
E-mail: secretario@segob.gob.mx
Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Minister

Mexico City Attorney General
Doctor Miguel Ángel Mancera Espinosa
Procurador General de Justicia del Distrito Federal
Gral. Gabriel Hernández # 56, 5° piso,
Col. Doctores, C.P. 06720, México D.F.
MEXICO
Fax: (+52) 55 5345-5558
Email: procurador@pgjdf.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Attorney/ Señor Procurador

President of the National Human Rights Commission
Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández
Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (CNDH)
Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos
Edificio "Héctor Fix Zamudio", 6° piso
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COPIES TO:

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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 05 November 2008.