

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST INTIMIDATED BY POLICE

Heavily-armed police officers surrounded the house of a Mexican woman whose brother has been disappeared since 2009. She and her family are campaigning for truth and justice and believe this intimidation is intended to deter her from organizing a march in his name.

According to **Brenda Rangel Ortiz**, more than 30 heavily-armed police officers, some of them in plain clothes and wearing balaclavas, turned up outside her home in the central Mexican city of Querétaro on 1 November at around 10 am. While pointing their guns at her, they told Brenda Rangel they had received an anonymous tip that there were guns in her home and pick-up truck. Brenda Rangel refused to let the officers in as they did not have a warrant. The officers, who belonged to state and municipal police forces, left after a 45-minute argument with her.

Later that day, around 10 municipal police officers returned and remained stationed in front of her home for two hours. They refused to provide any information to Brenda Rangel as to their reasons.

10 November 2013 will mark the fourth anniversary of the apparent enforced disappearance of Brenda Rangel's brother, **Héctor Rangel Ortiz**, in Monclova, Coahuila state. Municipal police from Monclova are involved in this case. Brenda Rangel and her family are organizing a silent march with friends and supporters in the city of Querétaro as part of their continuing demands for a full investigation to establish Héctor Rangel's whereabouts and for a law to criminalize enforced disappearance in Querétaro state. The family believe the police operations of 1 November were an attempt to deter them from marching on 10 November.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Querétaro state authorities to carry out a full investigation into the police operations of 1 November 2013 in front of Brenda Rangel's home and for those responsible to be held to account;
- Calling on them to ensure that the Rangel family and their friends and supporters can enjoy their right to freedom of expression and association during the march that they are organizing for 10 November;
- Calling on the Federal Attorney General's Office to carry out an effective investigation into all cases of disappearances and abductions, including the case of Héctor Rangel Ortiz, and bring those responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 DECEMBER 2013 TO:

Querétaro State Governor

Lic. José E. Calzada Rovirosa
Gobierno del Estado de Querétaro
5 de Mayo Esq. Luis Pasteur
Querétaro, C.P. 76000, Mexico
Fax: +52 442 214 2929

Email: josecalzada@queretaro.gob.mx,
poderejecutivo@queretaro.gob.mx
Twitter: @ppcalzada

Salutation: Dear Governor / Estimado
Señor Gobernador

Federal Attorney General

Jesús Murillo Karam
Procuraduría General de la República
Paseo de la reforma 211-213
Col. Cuauhtémoc, C.P. 06500
Mexico City, Mexico
Fax: +52 55 5346 0908

Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Attorney General /
Estimado Señor Procurador

And copies to:

FUUNDEC

Hidalgo Sur 166, Zona Centro
Saltillo, C.P. 2500, Coahuila, Mexico
Email:
dhsaltillo.desapariciones@gmail.com
Facebook: FUUNDECcoahuila

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The number of people who have disappeared or gone missing in Mexico – whether abducted by criminal gangs or subjected to enforced disappearance by public officials – has grown substantially since December 2006 when the then federal authorities launched a large-scale policing operation, involving the deployment of the military, to combat organized crime. In February 2013, the current government published a list of more than 26,000 people who had been reported missing since 2006. The authorities have failed to provide any further information on the whereabouts of these people. The National Human Rights Commission acknowledged in June 2013 that it had 2,400 cases of disappearances in which public officials were implicated.

The government of President Peña Nieto has partly recognized the gravity of the situation, but not the scale of involvement of public officials in enforced disappearances and the consistent failure to conduct proper investigations. Many state governments are still in complete denial. Convictions are very rare.

Many relatives of victims have faced threats and intimidation from criminals and public officials, as well as indifference or inadequate responses from state institutions. Around 70 of these families, including the Rangels, have formed Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Coahuila (Joint Forces for our Disappeared in Coahuila, FUUNDEC) in order to pressurise the authorities in a coordinated way.

Héctor Rangel disappeared with two other people on 10 November 2009 in the city of Monclova, Coahuila state, after they were stopped by municipal police. They were making a brief business trip but they were never seen again. Given the lack of investigation, Brenda Rangel and her relatives carried out their own enquiries, at great personal risk. Since June 2013 the case has been assigned to the Specialized Search Unit for Disappeared People (Unidad Especializada de Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas) of the Federal Attorney General's Office (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR). To date, Héctor Rangel's whereabouts remain unknown and nobody has been brought to justice.

According to international law, only those cases in which public officials are implicated directly or indirectly, constitute enforced disappearance. Nevertheless, international law also requires the authorities to investigate all disappearances or abductions regardless of the suspected perpetrator and bring those responsible to justice. The authorities have frequently tried to place sole blame for all abductions at the door of organized criminal gangs and failed to conduct basic investigations. As a result, evidence of collusion or direct involvement of public officials has been ignored so cases are almost never investigated as enforced disappearances.

Amnesty International's latest report on this issue, *Confronting a nightmare. Disappearances in Mexico*, was published on 4 June 2013 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/mexico-relatives-disappeared-deserve-more-promises-2013-06-04>). Brenda Rangel tells her own story to Amnesty International in this video clip: bit.ly/brendarangel. Several other families from FUUNDEC and other groups feature this video clip: bit.ly/tirelesssearch.

You may take online action here: <http://www.amnesty.ca/get-involved/take-action-now/mexico-brenda-rangel-ortiz-is-at-risk>

Name: Brenda Rangel Ortiz (f) and Héctor Rangel Ortiz (m)

Gender m/f: both

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