

URGENT ACTION

RISK OF THIRTY YEARS IN JAIL FOR FACEBOOK POSTS

Two Mexicans have been detained and charged with terrorism and sabotage after being accused of posting messages on Twitter and Facebook. Their trial is ongoing and they are being denied a fair trial. If found guilty, they could face thirty years in prison.

On 26 August, local journalist **María de Jesús (known as Maruchi) Bravo Pagola** and teacher **Gilberto Martínez Vera** were detained by judicial police at their homes in Veracruz City, on the east coast of Mexico. According to the state authorities, the two had been traced and arrested after rumours of suspected attacks on local schools by criminal gangs circulated through social media on 25 August. This led to scores of parents removing their children and several schools temporarily closing. The state government blamed the panic on the rapid circulation of false information and accused María de Jesús Bravo and Gilberto Martínez Vera of circulating the story on Twitter and Facebook, they were detained and accused of terrorism and sabotage under Veracruz state's criminal code.

The two were transferred to the capital of Veracruz state, Xalapa, where they were held incommunicado for more than 60 hours. During interrogation, they were put under severe pressure to make statements to the prosecutor admitting they circulated false information, but were not allowed access to their lawyers. In their later statements to the judge, they denounced ill-treatment and coercion and protested their complete innocence. There is apparently no evidence that the two were involved in or complicit in acts amounting to terrorism or sabotage, but on 31 August the judge ruled that there was enough evidence to proceed with the trial and remanded them into custody.

There has been increased violence in recent months in Veracruz as different drug gangs compete for control of the city. The insecurity creates a climate of distrust in which rumours circulate on social media as people try to protect themselves, because there is no reliable information available. Amnesty International is concerned that while information forwarded through Twitter and Facebook may not have been correct, the detention and prosecution of María de Jesús Bravo and Gilberto Martínez Vera on terrorism and sabotage charges is unjustified and violates their right to fair trial and freedom of expression. Amnesty International believes it is the responsibility of the authorities to disseminate correct and reliable information about the measures it is taking to protect the population.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern at the detention, and prosecution of María de Jesús Bravo and Gilberto Martínez Vera in Veracruz on terrorism and sabotage charges in connection with postings on Twitter and Facebook on 25 August;
- Call for an immediate and impartial investigation into allegations of ill-treatment, coercion and denial of access to lawyers of their choice during their detention by judicial police and prosecutors;
- Call for the right to fair trial and freedom of expression to be respected and for a full review of the conduct of state authorities in the detention and prosecution of María de Jesús Bravo and Gilberto Martínez Vera.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 OCTOBER 2011 TO:

Governor of Veracruz state

Javier Duarte de Ochoa
Palacio de Gobierno, Av. Enriquez
S/N, Col. Centro, CP 91000, Xalapa
Veracruz, México.
Fax: +52 228 841 8818
Email: javierduarte@veracruz.gob.mx

**Salutation: Estimado
Gobernador/Dear Governor**

Attorney General of Veracruz state

Lic. Reynaldo Gaudencio Escobar
Pérez; Procuraduría General de
Justicia; Circuito Rafael Guizar y
Valencia No. 707; Colonia Reserva
Territoria; C.P. 91096 Xalapa;
Veracruz; México
Fax: +52 228 841 6184 (say "fax")
Email: notaspjver@hotmail.com

**Salutation: Estimado Procurador/
Dear Attorney General**

And copies to:

Lawyers:
Ordoñez, Ordoñez Y Telles:
fidelguillermo65@yahoo.com.mx

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2007, violence linked to organized crime has spiralled in Mexico with more than 40,000 killings. President Calderón's administration has attempted to combat the drug cartels by deploying thousands of federal police and over 50,000 army and navy personnel in the worst affected areas. Members of the police and security forces as well as local authorities are frequently suspected of corruption and collusion with criminal gangs, creating a climate of impunity and insecurity for the population in the affected areas. Veracruz has witnessed increasing levels of violence as different drug cartels compete for control. Across the country violence has resulted in scores of deaths of uninvolved citizens and indiscriminate killings of passersby. Increasing attacks on journalists by criminal gangs has undermined coverage of security and crime stories coupled with the failure of many authorities to provide reliable and timely information on security threats have encouraged widespread use of social media to alert people to suspected attacks and threats in their communities.

Name: María de Jesús Bravo and Gilberto Martínez Vera

Gender m/f: María de Jesús Bravo (f); Gilberto Martínez Vera (m)

UA: 262/11 Index: AMR 41/052/2011 Issue Date: 31 August 2011