

PUBLIC

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UA 137/09 Fear for safety

MEXICO Lydia Cacho Ribeiro (f), journalist, human rights activist

An armed man has been photographing and keeping watch on Lydia Cacho Ribeiro's home and car in Cancún, Quintana Roo state. Lydia Cacho is a well-known human rights activist and journalist who has suffered harassment, threats and arbitrary detention for her work exposing a child pornography and trafficking ring.

Since 12 May, witnesses have seen an armed man in a car keeping watch on and photographing her home and her car. They have also seen two men in a car keeping watch on the office of the organization where Lydia Cacho works, *Centro Integral de Atención a las Mujeres* (CIAM - Shelter for women). She reported this to the local authorities, and told them the registration numbers of both cars. The authorities checked, and told her that the registration numbers did not correspond with the cars she had described, suggesting that the registration numbers were false.

Since February, Lydia Cacho has also had several death threats sent to her blog. On 19 May one of these threats said, *Mi estimada lidia cacho preparate que pronto apareceras degollada, tu cabeza tan bonita afuera de tu departamento aver sie ers tan valiente* (sic), ("dear lidia cacho (sic) get ready to have your throat cut, your lovely head will be left outside your apartment, let's see how brave you are.")

Lydia Cacho has been repeatedly attacked and harassed since she published her book *Los Demonios del Edén* (The Demons of Eden), which documents allegations that powerful businessmen had been involved in child prostitution and trafficking. A well-known businessman has since been arrested and is in prison facing serious criminal charges as a result of the book's allegations.

In December 2005 Lydia Cacho was arrested in Cancún and taken to Puebla City to face defamation charges filed by another businessman in connection with the publication of the book. According to her, during the 20-hour drive to Puebla, the police officers threatened her with sexual assault and other ill-treatment and said they would make her "disappear". In Puebla City she was held for several hours, and then released on bail to await trial. Eventually she was acquitted.

On 7 May 2007 a car carrying Lydia Cacho was apparently tampered with in an attempt to cause a fatal accident. A few days earlier she had given evidence at a hearing of the trial of one of the businessmen identified in her book. She has since received occasional police escorts in response to the threats.

In November 2007, in a ruling that caused a public outcry, Mexico's Supreme Court concluded that though there had been "irregularities" in her 2005 detention, Lydia Cacho had not suffered serious human rights violations. In March 2009 the National Human Rights Commission concluded she had suffered physical and psychological ill-treatment at the hands of the police who detained her.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Journalists and media workers in Mexico face serious risk of being attacked or murdered as a result for their work. The National Human Rights Commission stated in May 2009 that it had registered 50 journalists who had been killed between 2000 and 2009, and seven who had gone missing, presumed dead, between 2005 and 2009. During May 2009, two journalists were found dead: organized crime networks are believed to be responsible for the majority of these crimes, but suspects are virtually never identified or brought to justice.

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

- calling on the authorities to order a full review of the protection provided for Lydia Cacho Ribeiro, in order to guarantee her safety, in accordance with her wishes;
- calling for a full, impartial and prompt investigation into the threats that she received through her blog.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont Urueta
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

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza
Procuraduría General de la República
Av. Paseo de la Reforma n° 211-213, Piso 16
Col. Cuauhtémoc, Delegación Cuauhtémoc
México D.F., C.P. 06500, MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 5346 0908

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador General

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization:
ARTICLE 19 Mexico
Medellín 33 Col. Roma
México D.F. 06140, México
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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 17 July 2009.