

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN THREATENED BY ARMED SECURITY GUARDS

A Mexican campaigner living in the northern state of Chihuahua was threatened on 10 September by private security guards hired by local landowners. She and others living in Lomas del Poleo, are at risk of further acts of harassment.

On 10 September, Agustina Contreras was walking her daughter to primary school in Lomas del Poleo, when a pick-up truck veered towards her at high speed. Agustina Contreras and her daughter jumped into the bushes on the side of the road to avoid the truck hitting them. Agustina Contreras recognised the driver of the truck as one of the private security guards who patrols the entrance into Lomas del Poleo. The driver then leant out of the truck window and shouted: "You can't come in, keep that in mind" (No puedes entrar, tomalo en cuenta). The truck then drove off. Moments later a second pick-up truck accelerated towards Agustina Contreras and her daughter and almost knocked them over. The driver then got out of his vehicle and told Agustina Contreras "You can't come in anymore, we won't let you in again" (Tu ya no puedes entrar, ya no te vamos a dejar entrar). Agustina Contreras also recognised the second driver as being one of the private security guards of Lomas del Poleo.

In 2004, the Lomas del Poleo neighbourhood was surrounded by a barbed wire fence erected by private security guards hired by local landowners who contest the ownership of the land. Ever since, the entrance to Lomas del Poleo has been patrolled by these private security guards. For several years, Agustina Contreras has led a campaign to stop attempts by the private security guards to close down the Alfredo Nava Sahagún primary school in Lomas del Poleo in an effort to force the community off the land. The threats on 10 September are thought to be an attempt to intimidate Agustina Contreras, and others, into giving up her campaign.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the authorities to ensure that Agustina Contreras and other residents of Lomas del Poleo who have been repeatedly attacked by private security guards working for local landowners are given appropriate protection according to their wishes;
- calling on the authorities to order independent and impartial investigations into the attacks committed against residents, and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on them to prevent any illegal attempt to drive residents of Lomas de Poleo off their land and to expedite efforts to ensure the dispute is resolved fairly and satisfactorily in the appropriate agrarian tribunal.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 OCTOBER 2009 TO:

Governor of Chihuahua State

Lic. José Reyes Baeza Terrazas
Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua,
Palacio de Gobierno, 1er piso, C. Aldama
#901, Col. Centro,
Chihuahua, Estado de Chihuahua, C.P.
31000, Mexico

Fax: +52 614 429 3300 (then dial extension 11066 when prompted)

Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor

Attorney General of Chihuahua

Patricia González Rodríguez
Procuradora del Estado de Chihuahua
Procuraduría General de Justicia del
Estado
Vicente Guerrero 616, Col. Centro
Chihuahua 31000, Mexico

Fax: +52 614 415 0314

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Señora Procuradora**

Mayor of Ciudad Juárez

Lic. José Reyes Ferriz
Presidente Municipal de Ciudad Juárez
Unidad Administrativa Benito Juárez.
Primer piso, ala norte.
Av. Francisco Villa # 950 Norte, Cd.
Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico

Fax: +52 656 615 0690

Salutation: Dear Mayor/Señor Presidente Municipal

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 15/09. For further information <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR41/004/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

People living in the disputed area of Lomas del Poleo have been suffering harassment and attacks since 2003, when the supply of electricity was cut off. In 2005, according to local inhabitants, 40 dwellings were set on fire and a resident was beaten to death by the guards for opposing the torchings. As a result of this intimidation, today only 17 families still reside in the area. They claim that despite reporting the incidents with the local prosecutor's office no serious investigation or arrests have ever been carried out.

The land of Lomas del Poleo has acquired particular value in recent years as it stands between the city of Ciudad Juárez and an area which is destined to be developed into a new urban and industrial area by a group of businessmen.

An agrarian tribunal is considering the land dispute and has started a series of hearings between the residents of Lomas del Poleo and a local landowning family, but the case is progressing very slowly.

Further Information on UA: 15/09 Index: AMR 41/004/2009 Issue date: 16 January 2009

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