

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER IN DANGER

Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, a Mexican human rights defender who leads an Indigenous People's Organisation, received a written death threat on 6 March. Her life is in danger.

On 6 March, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, President of the Me'phaa Indigenous People's Organization (Organización del Pueblo Indígena Me'phaa (OPIM)), received a written death threat at the offices of the OPIM in Ayutla de los Libres, Guerrero state. The note read: "Obtilia, calm down you son of a bitch. Don't go around making denunciations against the government. I know you're presenting complaints at every level. Calm down. When we want to we can get you. Don't believe you're made of iron, bullets still go through. We are protected by the government, federal state and local. Don't fool around, we are close by." ("Optilia [sic], Calmate hijo de su chingada madre ya no ande denunciando en contra del gobierno ya se que tu presenta a la denuncia deatodo el nivel calma:.... Cuando queremos te hacemos frijoladas no creas que tu eres fierro como quiera atraviezan las balas nosotros como protegido Gobierno federal estatal local no l hagan pendejen estamo cerca por ti").

On the same day, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel and her colleagues had observed a man overtly watching the OPIM offices, including Obtilia Eugenio Manuel's arrivals and departures. The man also took photographs on his mobile phone.

After repeated threats and harassment, in April 2009 the Inter American Court of Human Rights issued a protection order (medidas provisionales) on behalf of Obtilia Eugenia Manuel, her husband and her children as well as other members of the OPIM and other human rights defenders in Guerrero. The protection order requires the Mexican authorities to provide protection measures for those at risk. Some protection measures were made available, such as mobile phones, but those behind the threats and attacks have never been identified or held to account.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Obtilia Eugenio Manuel and other members of OPIM in the light of the recent death threat and surveillance of the OPIM office in Ayutla de los Libres;
- Calling for her and other OPIM members to receive effective protection in line with their wishes and the Inter American Court of Human Rights protection order;
- Calling for a full investigation into the threat against Obtilia Eugenio Manuel and other members of OPIM and the surveillance of their offices, for the findings to be made public and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 APRIL 2010 TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont
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

Governor of Guerrero

Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero
Palacio de Gobierno,
Blvd. René Juárez Cisneros No. 62,
Ciudad de los Servicios, Chilpancingo,
C.P. 39075, Guerrero, MEXICO
Fax: +52 747 471 9956
Email: gobernador@guerrero.gob.mx
Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear
Governor

Attorney General of Guerrero

Mtro. Albertico Guinto Sierra
Encargado de Despacho de la PGJE de
Guerrero, Carretera Nacional México-
Acapulco Km. 6+300 Tramo
Chilpancingo-Petaquillos, Chilpancingo
39090, Guerrero, MÉXICO
Fax: +52 747 472 2328
Correo-e.:
cprocurador@pgjgro.gob.mx
Salutation: Señor Procurador

Also send copies to Human rights organisation: Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña "Tlachinollan" AC. Email: cdhm@tlachinollan.org and to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As founder and director of OPIM, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel has been the target of numerous threats, acts of intimidation and surveillance. One of the most recent incidents of intimidation took place on 17 March 2009, just after Obtilia attended a religious ceremony to commemorate human rights defender Raúl Lucas Lucía, leader of another local indigenous human rights organisation who was murdered in February 2009. Obtilia Eugenio Manuel received three death threats by text message to her mobile phone; one of the messages also warned her that no human rights organization could protect her. In January 2009, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel was followed several times. She recognized one of the men following her as a supporter of a local political boss (cacique), while another man leaned out of his car and shouted: "Do you think you're so brave? Are you a real woman? Let's hope you also go to prison...If you don't go to prison, we'll kill you." See further information on UA 314/08, AMR 41/006/2009.

On 9 April 2009, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights adopted precautionary measures requesting that the authorities take further steps to protect the life and integrity of Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, her family, other members of OPIM and 29 members of the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre, which was also threatened. While some protection measures have been implemented, the state authorities have not advanced investigations into the threats against Obtilia Eugenio Manuel or the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre.

In April 2010 the Inter American Court of Human Rights will consider the case of Inés Fernandez, an indigenous woman raped by soldiers in 2002, whose case has never been effectively investigated. Obtilia Eugenio Manuel has supported the campaign for justice for Inés Fernandez from the start and may be called as a witness. Obtilia Eugenio Manuel has also been outspoken in her demand for the end to harassment and intimidation of OPIM activists. In particular, she has led efforts to secure the immediate and unconditional release of the prisoner of conscience supported by Amnesty International, Raúl Hernández.

For more information on the risks faced by human rights defenders in Mexico, please see Amnesty International report: "Standing up for justice and dignity. Human rights defenders in Mexico", AMR 41/032/2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/032/2009/en>

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