

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDERS SPIED BY AUTHORITIES

In 2016, staff of the Specialized Sub-Attorney General's Office for Organized Crime Investigation (SEIDO) of the Attorney General's Office of Mexico (PGR), now the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime (FEMDO) of the Attorney General's Office of Mexico (FGR), illegally investigated and used targeted surveillance against human rights defenders Ana Lorena Delgadillo, Marcela Turati, and Mercedes Doretti, in relation with their work with relatives of missing migrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas. We urge Mexican authorities to stop any arbitrary and illegal investigation, targeted surveillance, and criminal action against them.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Attorney General of Mexico Alejandro Gertz Manero

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Dear Attorney General of Mexico,

I'm writing you to express my concern about the situation of human rights defender Ana Lorena Delgadillo, journalist Marcela Turati, and independent forensic expert Mercedes Doretti, who were the object of an investigation and unlawful surveillance in 2016 within the file of those responsible for the massacre of 196 migrants found in 48 clandestine graves in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, a massacre known as "the graves of San Fernando". The three women have worked tirelessly through their different disciplines to clarify the gross human rights violations involved in this case.

Amnesty International has found that the authorities' use of targeted surveillance against them was against international standards, as well as the domestic legislation. Notably, the decision was not based on reasonable suspicion with sufficient elements pointing to their involvement in organized crime and it did not comply with the requirement for warrants issued by an independent judicial authority. Surveillance against Ana Lorena, Marcela and Mercedes raises fears that they may have been targeted for their human rights work and their critical opinions of the government. Amnesty found that SEIDO violated their rights to privacy, freedom of expression, non-discrimination, and due process, as well as their right to defend human rights.

Those responsible for ordering the unlawful surveillance have not been prosecuted or punished. To date, it is unknown whether the surveillance and investigation against them continues. They remain with a constant threat that their judicial process will continue and that they will have to face a trial that does not comply with international safeguards.

Therefore, I urge you to close any investigation against Ana Lorena Delgadillo, Marcela Turati and Mercedes Doretti that stems from their human rights work and to put an end to any form of surveillance on them. I call on you as well to open a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the authorities involved in their criminalization and unlawful surveillance.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

San Fernando is a municipality in the state of Tamaulipas located on the northern border of Mexico, where the criminal groups known as Zetas and Gulf Cartel have been reported to be present, and where migrants, asylum seekers and victims of forced displacement transit on their way to the United States. In August 2010, the bodies of 72 migrants, mainly from Central and South America, were found in an open field in the vicinity of this municipality. According to Mexican authorities, the victims were kidnapped by the Zetas cartel and held on a ranch. When they refused to work for the group, they were killed and their bodies tied by the hands and left out in the open. In the same locality, in April 2011, members of the army found 196 bodies of people of various nationalities in 48 clandestine graves which, according to an official investigation, belonged to people who had been disappeared, murdered and placed in clandestine graves, possibly by the same cartel of Los Zetas in collusion with municipal police.

Ana Lorena Delgadillo is the founder of the Foundation for Justice and the Democratic Rule of Law (FJEDD), an organization that legally represents the families affected by the massacre; Marcela Turati is one of the leading journalists covering those events; and Mercedes Doretti was the independent expert and founder of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team which was analyzing remains found in the clandestine graves. The three women were prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office (SEIDO of the PGR). Within the criminal investigation of the massacre of migrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, they were investigated and placed under surveillance to obtain their personal information of, including their phone records and other private information.

The criminalization of these three human rights defenders has a chilling effect that deters people from defending human rights.

In the report [Persecuted: Criminalization of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico](#) published in May 2024, Amnesty International documented how SEIDO staff of the PGR diverted resources from the investigation of one of the most serious human rights violations, known as "the graves of San Fernando" or "San Fernando II", to carry out targeted surveillance against Ana Lorena, Marcela and Mercedes. In doing so, the Mexican state violated the rights to privacy, freedom of expression, non-discrimination and due process, as well as the right to defend human rights.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish. You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 16 July 2024. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ana Lorena Delgadillo (she/her); Marcela Turati (she/her); Mercedes Doretti (she/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: NA

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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