



URGENT ACTION:
Threats against Labor Rights Advocates in Puebla

Facts:

On December 20th of this year, the offices of The Center for Worker Support (CAT), a nongovernmental agency dedicated to the defense and promotion of labor rights in the state of Puebla, were robbed and the organization's members were threatened through a painted message on the wall.

At 10 a.m. Mrs. Cecilia Medina, a member of CAT, arrived to the offices like any other normal work day, however when she opened the door she noticed that the Christmas decorations she had put up on the walls a few days prior were on the floor and on hall's floor were documents and files of cases in which CAT had been active in for a few years.

This was followed by Mrs. Medina noticing that the walls in the conference room had been vandalized with the message: "YOU DO NOT KNOW WHO YOU ARE MESSING WITH" and on the floor were the posters of the Johnson Controls labor rights campaign, which they were also threatened and physically attacked by members of the Mexican Regional Workers Confederation (CROM).

Moreover, in the top part of the office she noticed that they had tampered with the lock of the cabinet where the hard drive which held important documents concerning the human rights campaigns that CAT had pushed forward since its founding 10 years ago. They also stole six desktop computers, a laptop, a video camera, a photocopier and a telephone. Additionally, they tampered with the locks of the financial document's cabinet, taking the institutions checkbooks, as well as the available cash and copies of the financial reports.

Cecilia Medina, along with Victoria Hernandez and Enrique Morales Montaña, members of CAT, who had arrived at the offices, called the 060 emergency number asking for help from the municipal police, which never came despite being called multiple times.

It is important to note that risk the members of CAT face is bigger every day due to the fact that this act is yet another act of repression that they have faced this year. On April 28 of this year, they were physically assaulted by two people, one of which was the son of Magdaleno Taxis, the union deputy of CROM. Hence, the attack was reported to the Public Ministry, due to the complaint filed by CAT Mr. Taxis committed to the Public Ministry that there would be no more threats against members of CAT by him or his son on August 5th of this year.

However, on August 9th of this year, the San Luis Teolocholco Tlaxcala community, Enrique Morales, Coral Juarez and Maria Luisa Rosina, members of CAT, were threatened by four men while doing field work, which consists of information visits and labor rights trainings for the workers of Johnson Controls. On this occasion, the men said; " they knew that they were with CAT and to tell Blanca (the director of CAT) that if she kept messing with CROM there would be



consequences and that if they came to the facility or to the workers' addresses they would get a scare.”

On August 16th of this year, Candido Corona Barruecos and Virgilio Melendez Morales, both workers of Johnson Controls Interiors and members of the committee of section 308 of the National Mining, Metallurgic and Similar Workers Union of Mexico, who were advisors for CAT, were beaten and deprived of their liberty for more than 7 hours during which they were physically assaulted by the members of the Confederation of Union Organizations (COS).

It is important to make visible, once again, the attacks against human rights advocates, where they are accused of inciting rebellion, spreading false information and damaging the reputation of the country, the only thing they seek is to silence criticism and weaken their action.¹ Even though it has been established internationally, the defense of human rights can only be exercised when the people who do it are not victims of threats or any other physical, psychological or moral aggressions or harassment.² Due to everything mentioned:

WE ASK THAT YOU IMMEDIATELY WRITE ASKING FOR:

1. The necessary measures be adopted to ensure the life and integrity of labor right advocates Blanca Velazquez, Catalina Guzman, Victoria Hernandez, Cecilia Medina and Enrique Morales Montaña, all members of CAT.
2. That an investigation be done immediately about the occurrences so that those responsible be brought before the law.
3. That the implementation of the Declaration about human rights advocates be ensure, adopted by the General Assembly of the U.N., which establishes that every person has the right , individually and collectively to promote and procure protection and realization of human rights and fundamental liberties in national and international arenas.³ The U.N. has established that all persons have the right to have his/her honor respected and the recognition of his/her dignity, for which nobody will be the object of illegal attacks on his/her honor or reputation, ever person has the right to protection under the law against such attacks.⁴

¹ ONU, Comisión de Derechos Humanos, Informe presentado por la Representante Especial del Secretario General sobre Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Hila Jilani, Informe Anual 2004, Doc/E/CN.4/2005/101. párrafo 54.

² CIDH, Informe sobre la situación de las defensoras y defensores de los derechos humanos en las Américas, 07 de marzo de 2006, Párrafo 46.

³ ONU (1999), *Declaración sobre el derecho y el deber de los individuos, los grupos y las instituciones de promover y proteger los derechos humanos y las libertades fundamentales universalmente reconocidos*, A/RES/53/144, 8 de marzo de 1999, Artículo 1.

⁴ Pacto Internacional de Derechos Civiles y Políticos, Artículo 17; Convención Americana de Derechos Humanos, Artículo 11; Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos, Artículo 12.



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