

Catherine Ashton  
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

22 January 2009  
Ref.: B931

Dear Ms Ashton,

**Subject: Amnesty International Report 'Standing up for justice and dignity - Human Rights defenders in Mexico'**

Ahead of the upcoming EU-Mexico Summit in May, Amnesty International wants to highlight the dire situation faced by human rights defenders in Mexico, which is one of the most dangerous countries in the Americas for human rights defenders. This became painfully true when Josefina Reyes, another human rights defender, was killed on 3 January.

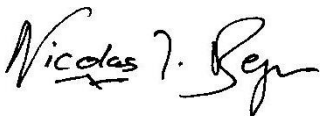
The scale and severity of attacks against human rights defenders therefore requires urgent action. Over the last 2 years, Amnesty International has documented a sustained pattern of killings, threats, intimidation and harassment against human rights defenders, especially against those defending economic, social and cultural rights. The authorities are sometimes responsible for bringing spurious and wrongful prosecutions against human rights defenders, simply to punish them for their human rights campaigning. In other cases reported, abuses against human rights defenders are perpetrated by unidentified individuals. State and federal authorities rarely effectively investigate these cases, compounding the abuses still further.

Amnesty International has urged the European Commission and the Council to show leadership in improving the implementation of the EU guidelines on Human Rights Defenders. As part of this initiative, we call on you to use all political dialogue with the Mexican government, especially the upcoming EU-Mexico Summit on 16 May and the ongoing dialogue between the EU delegation in Mexico and the Mexican government, to urge them to:

- Prioritize the protection of human rights defenders, in particular those who are most exposed to risk: those defenders working on Indigenous peoples' human rights and those working on economic, social and cultural rights
- Ensure prompt, impartial and exhaustive investigations into allegations of abuses against human rights defenders in order to prevent further risk, identify those responsible, bring them to justice and ensure that crimes cannot be repeated
- Ensure that the criminal justice system is not used to target or harass human rights defenders, and make clear to judicial authorities that the detention of human rights defenders, with or without arrest warrants, can be considered arbitrary, if the intention is to prevent, limit or silence the defence of human rights

We are at your disposal for discussing these issues further and would be grateful for feedback on how these matters are being taken forward.

Yours sincerely,



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