

Update on Lydia Cacho, Mexican Feminist

Amnesty International Fears for Safety of Lydia Cacho Ribeiro, Mexican Journalist and Human Rights Activist Whose Life has Been Threatened for Exposing a Child Pornography and Prostitution Ring

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NEW YORK. Amnesty International today urgently demanded that Mexican authorities step up protection around well-known human rights activist and journalist Lydia Cacho Ribeiro, whose home and offices in Cancun are being regularly photographed and watched by an armed man while her life has been threatened in online messages. The human rights organization said it fears for her life and called on Mexican authorities to guarantee her safety. Cacho has been harassed, threatened and detained by police over the years for her work exposing child pornography and prostitution.

Since May 12, witnesses have seen an armed man in a car keeping watch on and photographing her home and her car. They have also seen two men in a car keeping watch at the offices of the organization where Cacho works, Centro Integral de Atencion a las Mujeres (CIAM - Shelter for women). She reported this development to the local authorities, and told them the registration numbers of both cars. The authorities checked, and told her that the registration numbers did not correspond with the cars she had described, suggesting that the registration numbers were false.

Since February, Lydia Cacho has also had several death threats sent to her blog. On May 19, one of these threats said: "Get ready to have your throat cut, your lovely head will be left outside your apartment, let's see how brave you are."

Cacho has been repeatedly attacked and harassed since she published her book, *Los Demonios del Eden* (The Demons of Eden), which documents allegations that powerful businessmen had been involved in child prostitution and trafficking. A well-known businessman has since been arrested and is in prison facing serious criminal charges as a result of the book's allegations.

Amnesty International called on its worldwide network of activists to urgently appeal to Mexican authorities directly and to diplomats worldwide to immediately review protection provided to Cacho and to guarantee her safety. The organization is calling for a prompt investigation into the threats that she received through her blog.

In December 2005 Cacho was arrested in Cancun and taken to Puebla City to face defamation charges filed by another businessman in connection with the publication of the book. According to her, during the 20-hour drive to Puebla, the police officers threatened her with sexual assault and other ill-treatment and said they would make her "disappear." In Puebla City she was held for several hours, and then released on bail to await trial. Eventually she was acquitted.

In 2007 a car carrying Cacho was apparently tampered with in an attempt to cause a fatal accident. A few days earlier she had given evidence at a hearing of the trial of one of the businessmen identified in her book.

In November 2007, in a ruling that caused a public outcry, Mexico's Supreme Court concluded that though there had been "irregularities" in her 2005 detention, Cacho had not suffered serious human rights violations. In March 2009 the National Human Rights Commission concluded she had suffered physical and psychological ill-treatment at the hands of the police who detained her.

Cacho was the 2007 winner of Amnesty International USA's Ginetta Sagan Award for defenders of women and children's rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The National Human Rights Commission says 50 journalists were murdered between 2000 and 2009; another seven are missing and presumed dead between 2005 and 2009. During May 2009, two journalists were found dead: organized crime networks are believed to be responsible for the majority of these crimes, but suspects are virtually never identified or brought to justice.

Amnesty International is a Nobel Peace Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with more than 2.2 million supporters, activists and volunteers in more than 150 countries campaigning for human rights worldwide. The organization investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied.

Please visit <http://www.amnestyusa.org> for more information.