



OPEN LETTER

Challenging the feminicide of woman human rights defender Nadia Dominique Vera Perez; the feminicide of Yesenia Quiroz Alfaro, Mile Martin and Alejandra Negrete Virginia; and the murder of photojournalist Ruben Bonilla Espinosa

Mesoamerica, 23rd September 2015 – The undersigned organizations and networks express our condemnation of the feminicide of woman human rights defender **Nadia Dominique Vera Perez**; the feminicide of **Yesenia Quiroz Alfaro, Mile Virginia Martin** and **Alejandra Negrete**; and the murder of photojournalist **Ruben Bonilla Espinosa**.

What took place last July 31 in the City of Mexico was not an isolated event. Instead, it is one example of the worsening climate of hostility, aggression and criminalization currently facing women human rights defenders and journalists in Mexico. **Ruben Espinosa** and **Nadia Dominique Vera** were part of a community of resistance and had documented cases of corruption and human rights violations in the State of Veracruz. Separately, they had moved to Mexico City to escape the persecution, threats, attacks and harassment they had suffered in Xalapa, Veracruz.

Between 2010 and 2015, 34 women human rights defenders have been killed in Mexico¹. In 2012 alone **IM-Defensoras** recorded 118 attacks against women human rights defenders, 40% of which had a gender component. Women working for human rights in Mexico are attacked for their work as advocates, but also face the discrimination and gender violence that affects the majority of women in the country. Between 2012 and 2013, for example, 3,892 women were victims of feminicide².

¹ **2010 (6)**: Bety Cariño in Oaxaca, Josefina Reyes, Marisela Escobedo and María Isabel Cordero Martínez in Chihuahua, María Elvira Hernández Galeana in Guerrero and Selene Hernández León Estado of México **2011 (12)**: María Magdalena Reyes, Luisa Ornelas and Susana Chávez in Chihuahua; Isabel and Reyna Ayala Nava in Guerrero, Carmela Elisarraráz Méndez in Michoacán, Bárbara Lezama in Puebla and Julia Marichal, Ana María Marcela Yarce Viveros and Rocío González in el Distrito Federal., Yolanda Ordaz of Veracruz, María Elizabeth Macías Castro in Tamaulipas, **2012 (7)**: Agnes Torres Hernández of Puebla, Regina Martínez of Veracruz, Durvin Ramírez Díaz of Tabasco, Manuela Martha Solís Contreras in Chihuahua, Juventina Villa Mojica and Fabiola Osorio Bernáldez of Guerrero and Renata (René Espinoza Reyes). **2013 (3)**: Irma Ascencio Arenas (Hidalgo); María Concepción Martínez Medina (México D.F.); Gari Gómez Bastida (Hidalgo); **2014 (4)**: Rocío Mesino (Guerrero); Ana Lilia Gatica (Guerrero); Sandra Luz Hernández (Sinaloa), María del Rosario Fuentes (Tamaulipas), **2015 (2)**: Norma Angélica Bruno (Guerrero) and Nadia Vera (DF).

² Observatorio Nacional del Feminicidio (National Observatory on Feminicide).

The government institutions in Mexico have not met their obligation to protect and ensure a safe environment for people to promote and defend rights without risk of reprisal. The level of impunity in cases of attacks and murders of human rights defenders is alarming.

Woman human rights defender **Nadia Vera** was killed because the government did not respond in a timely manner to the many threats and attacks she suffered in Veracruz, one of the most violent states in which to practice journalism and the defense of human rights.

Given this serious situation, we urge the federal government and the governments of the Federal District and Veracruz to:

- Investigate in accordance with the law and with due diligence the femicide of woman human rights defender **Nadia Vera**, **Yesenia Quiroz Alfaro**, **Mile Virginia Martín** and **Alejandra Negrete**; and the murder of journalist **Ruben Espinoza Becerril**.
- Recognize the established pattern of violence inflicted by agents of the State of Veracruz on journalist **Ruben Espinosa** and advocate **Nadia Vera** as a line of inquiry, identifying each and every one of the persons who might be involved in this case, including, of course, public servants of the State of Veracruz.
- The authorities of the Attorney General of Federal District specifically, refrain from leaking information about this case. The information that has leaked to date has done much harm to the process by creating conflicting accounts of how the events occurred, how the evidence was obtained and who is responsible.
- Ensure the protection of the families, witnesses and any person or organization linked to this case.
- The government of Veracruz specifically, establish immediate measures to curb the serious situation of violence against women human rights defenders and journalists in the state, and release a public statement recognizing the work of human rights defenders and journalists as being a fundamental contribution to the development of democracy in Mexico.

Nadia Vera's femicide, and all other cases of assault and murders perpetrated against women human rights defenders in society, reinforces stereotypes that limit women's political and social participation, and normalizes and justifies violence against them. It is the obligation of the Mexican State and of society as a whole to ensure their full protection.

Sincerely,

APC (Asociación para el Progreso de las Comunicaciones)

AWID

Articulación Feminista Mercosur

CALALA – Fondo de Mujeres

CLADEM

Colectiva Feminista para el Desarrollo Local de El Salvador

Consortio Oaxaca

Cotidiano Mujer

Elige – Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos

Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres

Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama

FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund

Front Line Defenders

Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos

Iniciativa Nicaragüense de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos
JASS - Asociadas por lo Justo
Justice for Iran (JFI)
Nazra for Feminist Studies, Egypt
Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Guatemala
Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Honduras
Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en México
Red Salvadoreña de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos
UDEFEGUA