

Joint Statement

May 16, 2017

The murder of activist Miriam Rodríguez in Mexico highlights the dangers faced by mothers and families searching for their disappeared relatives

The Mexican government must guarantee protections for those who search for disappeared relatives and address the crisis of disappearances in the country

On the night of May 10, which was Mother's Day in Mexico, Miriam Elizabeth Rodríguez Martínez, a human rights defender and the mother of a disappeared daughter, was shot to death in the state of Tamaulipas. The undersigned organizations express our profound concern about Miriam's murder and urge Mexican authorities to take immediate action to ensure that this case is properly investigated and does not go unpunished.

Unfortunately, Miriam is the latest victim in a pattern of violence and retaliation against human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and individuals throughout Mexico who, through their work, denounce state negligence and wrongdoing in the country, from corruption to the lack of results in disappearance cases.

Mothers and family members of disappeared persons are in a particularly vulnerable situation. Due to the [absence of concrete efforts and results](#) by authorities to search for and identify disappeared persons, it is the families who risk their lives and take to the streets to look for evidence of their loved ones. It is the families who drive the official investigations and pressure the authorities to make progress. In this process, families often find themselves in dangerous situations. They lack the resources needed to carry out investigations and are vulnerable to potential retaliation by authorities and the perpetrators of the crimes.

Miriam's case confirms this. After the disappearance of her daughter Karen Alejandra Salinas in 2012 and due to the lack of results and trust in the authorities, Miriam joined an organization of families searching for their disappeared loved ones in Mexico. She was the leader of one such organization, the Collective of the Disappeared (*Colectivo de Desaparecidos*) in Tamaulipas. She herself investigated the whereabouts of her daughter and found her remains in a clandestine grave two years after her disappearance.

Miriam is not the only family member who has been murdered while demanding justice for disappearances and crimes committed against a loved one. According to information gathered by Mexican human rights groups, other cases of family members who were killed during their search for justice in disappearance cases include: Gerardo Corona Piceno in Jalisco in April of this year; José Jesús Jiménez in Veracruz in 2016; Heriberto López Gastelum in Sonora in 2016; Cornelia San Juan Guevara Guerrero "Doña Coni" in the State of Mexico in 2016; Bernardo Carreto, Norma Angélica Bruno, and Miguel Ángel Jiménez Blanco in Guerrero in 2015; Luis Abraham Cabada Hernández in Sinaloa in 2015; Sandra Luz Hernández in Sinaloa in 2014; Nepomuceno Moreno in Sonora in 2011; members of the

Reyes Salazar family in Chihuahua between 2008 and 2011; and Marisela Escobedo in Chihuahua in 2010. None of these cases should go unpunished.

Family members who search for their disappeared relatives in Mexico are [human rights defenders](#). Mexico's state and national human rights commissions, the Mechanism to Protect Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, and other federal and local agencies must recognize them as such. Authorities should provide them with adequate protection measures and ensure that the conditions exist for them to carry out their work without endangering their life.

We demand that Mexican authorities to carry out a serious investigation into Miriam's murder. Bureaucratic obstacles and conflicts of jurisdiction should not impede the investigation of this case or any other cases of attacks against family members searching for a disappeared relative.

The undersigned organizations express our sincere condolences to Miriam's family and colleagues. We offer our solidarity in their efforts to end the crisis of disappearances in Mexico (which, according to official [data](#), totals more than [30,000 cases](#)) and end the [violence](#) against human rights defenders that persists in the country.

Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF)

JASS (Just Associates)

Latin America Working Group Education Fund (LAWGEF)

Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI)

Peace Brigades International (PBI)

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)