

# URGENT ACTION



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UA 265/09

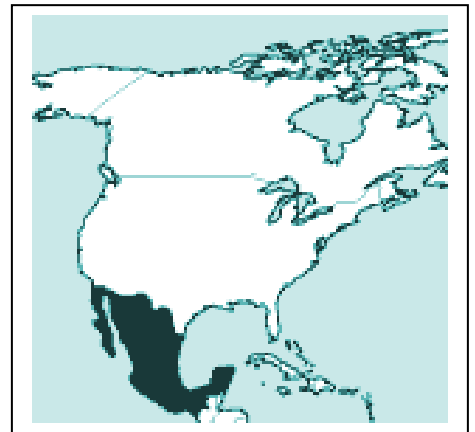
Fear for safety

MEXICO

Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson (m)

Human rights lawyer Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson has been threatened with death because of his work in charge of the Ciudad Juárez office of the Chihuahua State Human Rights Commission (CEDH), in northern Mexico.

On his way home from work in Ciudad Juárez on 4 September, he stopped at a traffic light. A car pulled up beside him; the driver lowered the window, made a gun shape with his hand and pretended to shoot him, saying, "Quiet down or we are going to kill you," (*Ya bájale porque te vamos a matar*), and drove off. Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson asked the CEDH to provide protection, but they refused, and he has been forced to seek safety over the border in the town of El Paso, USA.



Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson has been in charge of the Ciudad Juárez office of the Chihuahua CEDH since April 2008. He has been one of the few officials to publicly recognize that there has been a large increase in the number of complaints of serious human rights violations, including torture and extrajudicial executions in Ciudad Juárez, by the armed forces carrying out police duties. The CEDH has only limited powers to receive such complaints, but as other institutions have failed to take action the Ciudad Juárez CEDH office has undertaken to accept complaints, publicly criticize military abuses and press the appropriate authorities to respond. This has led to severe criticism from the local military commander. The president of the CEDH based in Chihuahua City has ordered Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson to stop receiving complaints from victims of alleged abuses by the military and refused to support his request for protection. According to Gustavo de la Rosa, the CEDH has also told him that he will lose his job if he does not return to work by 6 October.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 2007, violence linked to organized crime has spiraled in Mexico: the media have reported more than 14,000 drug cartel related killings. The majority of these murders have occurred in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state. President Calderón's administration has attempted to combat the drug cartels by deploying thousands of federal police and over 45,000 military personnel in the worst affected areas, particularly Ciudad Juárez. However this has not resulted in a reduction in violence. According to the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), reports of abuses by the military, including unlawful killings, torture, arbitrary detentions and illegal house searches increased six-fold between 2006 and 2008. These cases are routinely investigated and tried by the military justice system, which does not guarantee an impartial and independent investigation, resulting in impunity for the vast majority of perpetrators. As a result victims and their relatives are denied an effective recourse to justice, and military officials are aware that they are extremely unlikely to be held to account.

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***Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.***

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:**

- Calling on the authorities to provide Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson and his family with protection in line with his wishes so that he can continue his vital work in Ciudad Juárez;
- Calling on them to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the threats against Gustavo de la Rosa, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on the Chihuahua State Human Rights Commission to assist in improving his security and support his work receiving complaints from victims of abuses by military personnel.

**APPEALS TO:**

**Minister of Interior**

Secretario de Gobernación  
Bucareli 99, 1er piso  
Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc  
México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO  
**Fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414**  
**Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx**  
**Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Minister**

**Governor of Chihuahua State**

Lic. José Reyes Baeza Terrazas  
Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua,  
Palacio de Gobierno, 1er piso, C. Aldama #901,  
Col. Centro, Chihuahua, Estado de Chihuahua,  
C.P. 31000, MEXICO  
**Fax: 011 52 614 429 3300 (then dial  
extension 11066 when prompted)**  
**Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor**

**Chihuahua Human Rights Commission**

Lic. José Luis Armendáriz González  
Presidente de la Comisión Estatal de Derechos  
Humanos de Chihuahua  
Calle Décima y Mina, 1000, Col. Centro, C.P. 31000,  
Chihuahua, MEXICO  
**Fax: 011 52 614 410 0828**

**COPIES TO:**

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Washington DC 20006  
**Fax: 1 202 728 1698**  
**Email: mexembusa@sre.gob.mx**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

**Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 16 November 2009.**