

# URGENT ACTION



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13 October 2009

UA 273/09

Fear for safety

MEXICO

Jesús Sánchez de la Barquera (m), environmental defender

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Male environmentalist Jesús Sánchez de la Barquera has been shot and wounded outside his home in Mexico State, near the Mexican capital, Mexico City. He had been threatened and told to stop his campaigning for the defense of woodlands and for the right of local people to be informed and consulted about the use of their lands.

Early on 29 September, Jesús Sánchez set out to accompany his daughter to a nearby bus stop when he was shot by a man who had been waiting in a car outside his home in Jilotzingo municipality. The bullet went through Jesús Sánchez's shoulder. He has since recovered and has now been discharged from hospital. However, the lives of Jesús Sánchez and his family are at risk as they have received death threats on several occasions.



Jesús Sánchez is a well-known environmental activist who has led his community to defend local woodlands from illegal and excessive building of residential homes and commercial buildings. He has often campaigned publicly and pursued complaints in the courts against the actions taken by community representatives, highlighting their inadequate consultation with inhabitants and illegal use of land. On several occasions the courts have ruled in his favour, and as a result he and his family have been threatened. On 12 October, men supporting the local representatives shouted at Jesus Sanchez's daughter: "Are you still here? Don't you get it? Go to hell!" (*Siguen aqui? Que no entienden? Vayanse a la chingada*).

In March 2008 another local environmentalist was shot and killed after receiving threats. Lawyer Fernando Mayén Sánchez had been representing a group of Jilotzingo inhabitants, including Jesus Sánchez and his family, opposing the opening of a landfill site on their communal lands, adjacent to water springs and a dam. No one has been brought to justice for his killing.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Mexico face threats, attacks, politically motivated criminal charges and imprisonment for leading protests or promoting respect for human rights. Activists working for the defense of economic, social and environmental rights are even more at risk as they are often not recognized for the work they do and are targeted by powerful interests.

The government has agreed to provide protection measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to several human rights defenders, but some have reported that no effective protection has been provided.

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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.**

Substantial efforts have not been made to investigate cases of abuses against human rights defenders; impunity is the general rule in these cases, leaving open the possibility of further attacks.

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

- calling on the authorities to investigate the threats against and shooting of Jesús Sánchez de la Barquera and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging them to provide effective protection for Jesús Sánchez and his family, in accordance with their wishes;
- calling on the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killing of Fernando Mayén Sánchez and bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without obstacles or fear of reprisals.

**APPEALS TO:**

**Minister of Interior**

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont Urueta  
Secretario de Gobernación  
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**Governor of Mexico State**

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Gobernador del Estado de México  
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**Attorney General of Mexico State**

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**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

**Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 24 November 2009.**