

*Amnesty International USA*  
**16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence:**  
**Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women**  
(25 November – 10 December 2013)

**Mexico:**  
**Accountability for torture and rape**  
**survivor Miriam Isura López Vargas**

**Background Information**

([Youtube Video Summary available here](#))

It took Miriam Isaura López Vargas several weeks to piece together what happened to her after she was tortured and raped by Mexican soldiers.



Miriam Isaura López Vargas was tortured and raped by Mexican soldiers in 2011. © Agencia Reforma

On 2 February 2011, the 30-year-old mother of four had just dropped three of her children at school in the city of Ensenada, in northern Mexico, when two men wearing balaclavas forced her into a white van and took her away.

Until then, Miriam didn't know the men were soldiers or that she was being taken to a military barracks. She was blindfolded and her hands were tied.

"I didn't know who they were or anything, and when I asked them they put a gun to my head and told me to shut up or they would blow my head off..." Miriam was then taken to a military barracks in the city of Tijuana, around 84 kilometers away, where she was kept for a week.

**The worst seven days of her life.**

"In that place they tortured me. They repeatedly put wet cloth over my face and poured water over it so I couldn't breathe. They gave me electric shocks," she explained. Miriam repeatedly raped by soldiers while she was there. The soldiers were trying to force her to "confess" to trafficking drugs through a military checkpoint. She denies any involvement and asserts that she was travelling to visit her mother who lives 45 kilometers away, a journey she took several times a week. She was finally released on 2 September 2011, after her case was thrown out of court for a lack of evidence.

Today, Miriam still struggles to come to terms with her story. "I still think it was a bad dream, a nightmare. I try to live normally but I'm always scared, for me, for my family; that something is going to happen to them. I'm always on the defensive, waiting for the time when they will come to do something to me because I never expected to experience what happened to me," said Miriam.

Miriam López is not the only one. According to Mexico's National Human Rights Commission Reports, torture and ill-treatment rose by 500 per cent in Mexico between 2006 and 2012. Convictions for these crimes are very rare, but your letter can help bring Miriam's torturers to justice.

## Take Action Now!

You can stand with Miriam and demand accountability and justice now in a number of ways!

**1. Write a letter to the Attorney General of Mexico** demanding accountability and justice! You can write a letter in your own words, or use our model letter below:

### Model Letter

Dear Attorney General,

I am writing to ask that you to take action on the case of Miriam Isaura López Vargas, a case that has become emblematic of the widespread and systematic use of torture and ill-treatment in Mexico. According to Amnesty International the use of torture and ill-treatment in Mexico has increased alarmingly in recent years, but those responsible are virtually never held accountable. It is time to recognize this and send a clear message that torture and ill-treatment, whether by members of the armed forces or the police, will not be tolerated.

Miriam Isaura López Vargas was detained by members of the Mexican army in February 2011 in Ensenada and tortured, sexually assaulted, in order to force her to sign false statements. She was held in pre-charge detention (arraigo) for 76 days before being charged with narcotics offences. However, there was no evidence against her and her release was ordered in September 2011. She filed a complaint for torture with the CNDH and the Federal Attorney's Office and subsequently received death threats.

The September 2012 CNDH recommendations (52/2012) confirmed her torture, but the Federal Attorney General Office (Procuraduría General de la República-PGR), have still failed to prosecute those responsible. I believe that securing truth, justice and reparations for Miriam Lopez is a test of your government's commitment not to tolerate torture.

In November 2012, the United Nations Committee against Torture issued new recommendations to the government of Mexico to implement concrete steps to combat torture, ensure effective investigation and prosecution of abuses and guarantee victims receive reparations. What is your government doing to comply with these recommendations?

I look forward to hearing about the action you are taking to end the impunity of those members of the Mexican Army responsible for the detention, torture and sexual assault of Miriam Isaura López Vargas.

Yours,

Address:

Jesús Murillo Karam  
Attorney General / Procurador General de la República  
Procuraduría General de la República (PGR)  
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*Please send your questions or any feedback you may receive from Mexican authorities to:*

Diego E Zavala  
Mexico Country Coordination Group (Chair)  
[dzavala@aiusacs.org](mailto:dzavala@aiusacs.org)

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Mexico Country Coordination (assist)  
[elopez@aiusacs.org](mailto:elopez@aiusacs.org)

**2. Tweet to Educate:** In addition to letter writing, tweet more information about Miriam Lopez’s case. Here are some sample tweets:

- End impunity. Justice for #MiriamLópez. #16days <http://bit.ly/Amnesty16days>
- Arbitrary arrest. Detention w/o charge. Impunity. Torture. Violence Against Women. We want justice for #MiriamLópez <http://bit.ly/Amnesty16days>
- Bring perpetrators to justice. #HumanRights for all including #MiriamLópez. #16days <http://bit.ly/Amnesty16days>

**3. Tell Miriam on facebook:** Click “Like” and leave a message on her Facebook page: [bit.ly/miriamlopez](http://bit.ly/miriamlopez)

Suggested messages:

Miriam, remember that you are not alone in this struggle. I am with you.  
¡Fuerza Miriam! Estamos contigo.  
Do not give up hope! You are not forgotten!

Please include your name and country.

**4. Share this video:** This video outlines Miriam’s story—help educate others about Miriam’s case!  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btCPkdIQ\\_TQ&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btCPkdIQ_TQ&feature=youtu.be)

**3. Sign this online action:** Your email will join thousands of others demanding accountability!  
<http://www.amnesty.org//en/appeals-for-action/Torture-in-Mexico>

**Questions?** Please email us at [whr@aiusa.org](mailto:whr@aiusa.org)!

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