

URGENT ACTION

ASSAILANTS BURN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S CAR

Unidentified intruders entered the residence of Mario Luna Romero, leader of the Indigenous Yaqui community in Sonora state, northern Mexico, and set fire to his partner's car. To date, no protection measures have been provided at the defender's house and investigations are advancing slowly. Mario Luna and his family remain at risk.

In the morning of 27 June, **Victoria Anahí Ochoa Domínguez**, the wife of **Mario Luna Romero**, observed smoke rising from their garage and ran outside to find her vehicle on fire. A few hours later, when her husband arrived home from an overseas trip, he reported the incident to the federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, from which he receives protection measures as a defender of the Indigenous Yaqui community's territory in Sonora state. Representatives of the Protection Mechanism assured him that state security police would promptly be sent, but the police never arrived. In turn, Mario Luna called the local investigative police who came to inspect the scene that same day. They found evidence of a glass bottle filled with gasoline and wrapped in cloth that had been thrown under the car, clearly signaling an intentional attack.

This is not the first time that Mario Luna and his family have faced security incidents. Anahí Ochoa told Amnesty International that in the weeks prior to the 27 June incident, unfamiliar vehicles were stationed outside of their home on repeated occasions. Mario Luna has carried out a number of activities in defense of collective rights of the Yaqui community, especially in relation to the right to water in light of the Independence Aqueduct, a project which could threaten the community's access to water and cultural survival.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Calling on authorities to urgently ensure effective implementation of the protection measures owing to Mario Luna and his family under the Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, especially regarding patrols by Sonora State Police and security cameras in his home;
- Calling on them to ensure a prompt, impartial and exhaustive investigation into the incident of 27 June, especially in relation to forensic evidence including the analysis of fingerprints found on the burnt vehicle, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on them to urgently and publicly recognize the legitimate role of Mario Luna as a human rights defender in order to send the message that attacks against him and his family are unlawful.

Contact these two officials by 21 August, 2017:

Governor of the State of Sonora

Claudia Pavlovich Arellano
Palacio de Gobierno

Comonfort y Dr. Paliza S/N, Colonia Centenario
Hermosillo, Sonora, México, C.P. 83260

Contact form: <http://www.sonora.gob.mx/contacto.html>

Twitter: @claudiapavlovic

Salutation: Dear Governor/ Estimada Señora Gobernadora

Ambassador Geronimo Gutierrez Fernandez

Embassy of Mexico

1911 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

Washington DC 20006

Phone: 1 202 728 1600

Email: mexembusa@sre.gob.mx

Twitter: @EmbamexEUA, @GERONIMO_GF

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 169.17*

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mario Luna Romero has carried out continuous activities in defense of territory, water and environment as well as the cultural survival of the Indigenous Yaqui community. On 23 June, a few days before his wife's car was burnt, Mario Luna had filed a legal response to a judicial order calling on the National Water Commission (Comisión Nacional del Agua, CONAGUA) to comply with a court order to resolve issues of free, prior informed consent of the Yaqui community. Throughout 2017 Mario Luna has carried out a number of activities in representation of Indigenous Peoples of Mexico, including representation in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples in May 2017, and participation in a consultation with the National Indigenous Congress of Mexico to consult other Indigenous Peoples in order to reach a consensus for an Indigenous presidential candidate in Mexico's 2018 elections.

Mario Luna was imprisoned from September 2014 to October 2015 under charges that were aimed at criminalizing his efforts as a human rights defender. Amnesty International released a series of Urgent Actions calling for his release during this time. Mario Luna was released in October 2015 after a judge found evidence against him and fellow Yaqui leader Fernando Jiménez was lacking (see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr41/2720/2015/en/>). The Yaqui community and a number of NGOs, including Amnesty International, maintained that Mario Luna and Fernando Jiménez's prosecution could have been politically motivated. This is due to the two men's involvement in the Yaqui community's campaign to claim their right to consultation and free, prior and informed consent in relation to the construction of an aqueduct which could have reduced the community's available water.

The Independence Aqueduct which affects the Yaqui community has been in full use for a few years. In 2013 the National Supreme Court recognized the failure of federal and state authorities to meet their obligations to the Yaqui community and required remedial actions, particularly regarding a new environmental impact assessment and a consultation process. The ruling is yet to be implemented. In 2015 a governmental anthropology institute concluded that the aqueduct seriously affected the survival of the Yaqui people and therefore the authorities should consider suspending the aqueduct in order to comply with the Supreme Court decision.

Name: Victoria Anahí Ochoa Domínguez (f), Mario Luna Romero (m), Carlos Luna (m) and other members of their family
Gender m/f: all