

via fax: 011 52 55 53 46 09 08 Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza Attorney General of the Republic of Mexico	via fax: 011 52 22 372 867 Lic. Blanca Laura Villeda Martinez Attorney General of State of Puebla, Mexico
via fax: 011 52 22 46 02 71 Lic. Mario Marin Torres Governor of State of Puebla, Mexico	via fax: 011 52 55 5557 9865 Lic. Cecilia Romero Castillo Commissioner of the National Institute of Migration, Mexico

November 4, 2008

Dear Sirs and Madams:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of the **residents of the town of Rafael Lara Grajales**, Puebla, who gave assistance to a group of Central American migrants escaping from a gang holding them for ransom. On October 12, about **60 people from Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua who had been kidnapped** while trying to travel to the US, escaped from a house where about ten kidnapers were torturing them. Town residents offered assistance as the migrants ran down the streets, some of them naked and bleeding. The migrants said that the gang was working in conjunction with Rafael Lara Grajales municipal police officers.

Agents of the local State Public Prosecutor's office detained about half the migrants and tried to force them onto a bus with no number plates, driven by a civilian. Residents protested, fearing the migrants would be returned to the kidnapers. The crowd grew to 1,000 and clashed with police: a police car and two motorbikes were set on fire and municipal offices were damaged. Three hundred state riot police dispersed the crowd with tear gas and batons. Later, residents took the migrants directly to federal migration authorities. The migrants identified four of the kidnapers, who were handed over to the Federal Attorney General's Office.

State police arrested and charged eight people with rioting and property damage. They were prevented from seeing lawyers or their families for several days. The authorities issued arrest warrants for 18 others. The municipal police implicated in the activities of the kidnapers are under investigation but have not been suspended, and at least six of the kidnapers are still at large. The National Human Rights Commission has opened an investigation into the abuses against the migrants.

We strongly urge that you:

- protect the people who assisted migrants fleeing from kidnapers on October 12;
- ensure that all those arrested in Rafael Lara Grajales receive due process and a fair trial;
- ensure that no residents are subject to fabricated criminal charges in reprisal for their humanitarian efforts to assist migrants;
- investigate allegations that municipal police in Rafael Lara Grajales municipality were involved in the kidnapping of migrants and ensure that they are brought to justice;
- provide the migrants who were kidnapped, beaten and subjected to extortion, with temporary visas so they can testify against those responsible without fear of reprisals or repatriation.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Dr. Jose Luis Soberanes Fernandez, President of National Human Rights Commission ~ via fax: 011 52 55 56 81 81 25
 Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 728 1698
 Antonio O. Garza, Jr., US Ambassador to Mexico ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5207-0091
 William Duncan, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.5752
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ fax: (202)458-3992
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: