

Via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414 Lic. Fernando F. Gomez-Mont Urueta Minister of the Interior of Mexico	Via fax: 011 52 961 6165724 Mtro. Raciel Lopez Salazar Attorney General of the State of Chiapas, Mexico
Via fax: 011 52 961 618 8050, ext.: 21122 Lic. Juan Jose Sabines Guerrero Governor of the State of Chiapas, Mexico	

December 16, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply distressed over the killing of **Mariano Abarca Roblero**, a human rights defender and leading member of the Mexican Network of People Affected by Mining (**REMA**). On November 27, while he was standing in front of his house in Chicomuselo municipality, Chiapas, Abarca was shot three times by a man riding a motorbike. He leaves behind a wife and four children. A neighbor with whom he was talking, also a member of REMA, was injured.

In June and July, Abarca and other REMA activists led a blockade preventing trucks from Blackfire, a Canadian mining company, from entering and leaving their open-pit barium sulfite mine in Chicomuselo, which REMA believes is damaging the environment. On August 17, days before REMA held a regional meeting of environmentalist activists in Chicomuselo, armed Chiapas state police officers in unmarked cars arrested Abarca without an explanation or warrant, on charges filed by Blackfire regarding the highway blockade. He was released unconditionally on August 25 because there was no evidence that the highway blockade was violent or threatened public order.

Days before his death, Abarca had filed a complaint with the State Attorney General's Office (PGJE) relating to a death threat he had received in August. According to the complaint, a man claimed he would "pump lead into him" for leading the protests. The PGJE has opened an investigation into his murder.

Dozens of REMA supporters demonstrated outside the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City on December 3, claiming that Blackfire employees were involved in the murder of Abarca.

Abarca is a victim of a World Bank-mandated mining sector deregulation scheme which opens up Mexico's previously protected national mining industry to foreign companies, resulting in excessive use of scarce water supplies and back-door maneuverings that allow the purchase of community-owned lands (ejidos) without the required approval of the ejido assembly.

We **strongly urge** that you

- provide immediate and effective protection for Mariano Abarca Roblero's family, witnesses to his murder, and members of REMA in Chicomuselo, in accordance with their wishes;
- take immediate steps to expedite a thorough and impartial investigation into Mariano Abarca Roblero's murder on November 27 in Chicomuselo and to ensure the findings are made public and those responsible brought to account;
- remember that local activists who campaign for human rights, including the provision of basic services (e.g. water) are protected under the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, obliging states to ensure they can carry out their activities without obstacles or fear of reprisals.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Otros Mundo Human Rights Organization ~ via US mail
Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202-728-1698
Ambassador Carlos Pascual ~ 011-52-55-5080-2834
Mary Stickles, 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 Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA321/09/Mexico

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