

via fax: 011 52 55 5093 3414

Sr. Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong
Minister of the Interior of Mexico

via fax: 011 52 55 5346 0908

Sr. Jesús Murillo Karam
Attorney General of Mexico

July 5, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our deep concern for the safety of **José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez**, coordinator of the migrants' shelter All for Them (*Todos por Ellos*), and others at the shelter in Tapachula, Chiapas State. On June 24, José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez was threatened with death by a former resident of the shelter who had subsequently joined a local gang. He said, "I'm sorry brother, I know you've helped me but I have to kill you. I have to kill everyone here in the shelter; I have to kill you because I have been ordered to do it."

Jorge Adevar Echeverria Escalante, another coordinator of the shelter, asked help from a police officer stationed outside the shelter as part of the security measures of the federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists. He failed to take any action. José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez activated the panic button provided as part of the same security measures. It took more than 20 minutes to receive an answer. He made a phone call to a federal police commander; a police patrol car arrived 45 minutes later. By that time the aggressor had left.

Todos for Ellos provides temporary shelter, food, health, and legal aid to underage migrants, including victims of sexual exploitation. We find it extremely troubling that staff members have not received a timely response to intimidation and death threats. At the same time, abuses against irregular migrants also continue unabated. The impunity enjoyed by those responsible for attacks on migrants and human rights defenders is totally unacceptable. State authorities who are suspected of involvement in threats such as described herein must be investigated and prosecuted.

José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez was forced to temporarily close the shelter in 2013 after death threats. The shelter was re-opened after protection measures were agreed to and implemented. Because threats against shelter staff continue, we **strongly urge** that you

- review the security and protection measures that are already in place;
- provide better security and protection measures, after consultation with José Ramón Verdugo Sánchez, Jorge Adevar Echeverria Escalante, staff, volunteers and migrants at the Todos por Ellos shelter;
- initiate a full and impartial investigation into the threat against shelter staff on June 24, hold accountable the person responsible, and take measures to ensure the threat is not carried out;
- combat criminal gangs that are targeting irregular migrants in Chiapas State and migrants' rights defenders working on their behalf, and hold accountable any public officials implicated in colluding with gang members.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Todos por Ellos ~ via email
Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 728 1698
Earl Anthony Wayne, US Ambassador to Mexico ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5080-2834
Chris Andino, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via email: andinocl@state.gov
James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Mexico, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
Felipe González, Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email: cidhmigrantes@oas.org
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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