

# URGENT ACTION

## THREATS AGAINST WIDOWER OF MURDERED DEFENDER

**The widower of a human rights defender killed in 2010 has received information concerning plans to take his life. The threats follow a series of intimidating acts directed at him and others that are calling for the investigation of the murder.**

On 17 May **Omar Esparza**, widower of a human rights defender killed in April 2010, was informed by a reliable source that an armed group of hired assassins had been contracted to kill him. This information was then corroborated with a number of sources who confirmed the same details. The threats against Omar Esparza appear to be linked to his role in calling for justice for the killing of his former wife, Bety Cariño. In the early morning of 1 June, unidentified persons attempted to invade the house where his children have been residing with family members.

These death threats are the latest in a series of intimidations against Omar Esparza. For five years, he has led a social struggle calling for the investigation of the killing of Bety Cariño in 2010 near the Indigenous town of San Juan Copala, Oaxaca state. After years demanding progress in the criminal investigation, two suspects were arrested in 2015. Two Indigenous Triqui women who were eyewitnesses to the killing were threatened following one of these arrests. In addition, weeks after a second suspect was arrested in March 2015, Omar Esparza received a call from a relative of the arrested man demanding that he retract his public statements against the suspect.

In 2012 arrest warrants were issued against an armed gang with apparent links to municipal and state authorities in connection with the killing of human rights defenders Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola in April 2010. Ten of those accused remain at large, as state and federal authorities have consistently failed to carry out the arrest warrants, apparently due to fear of retaliation from the gang.

**Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Urging the federal and state authorities to provide effective and comprehensive protection for Omar Esparza, in strict accordance with his wishes, and in full compliance with local legislation on witness protection;
- Calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the threats against Omar Esparza, and for those responsible to be brought to account;
- Calling for a full investigation into the killing of Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola, as well as the killing of many other people from San Juan Copala in the last few years, including the apparent links between armed gangs and municipal and state authorities, and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 JULY 2015 TO:**

Governor of Oaxaca State  
 Lic. Gabino Cué Monteagudo  
 Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca  
 Plaza de la Constitución, Centro  
 Histórico, Oaxaca de Juárez,  
 Oaxaca, C.P. 68000, México  
 Fax: +52 95 1501 8100, ext. 40068  
 Email: spagoboaxaca@gmail.com  
**Salutation: Dear Governor / Estimado  
 Gobernador**

Minister of the Interior  
 Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong  
 Secretario de Gobernación  
 Secretaría de Gobernación  
 Bucareli 99, col. Juárez, Cuauhtémoc,  
 Distrito Federal, C.P. 6600, México  
 Fax: +52 55 5093 3414  
 Email: secretario@segob.gob.mx  
**Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado  
 Secretario**

Federal Attorney General  
 Arely Gómez González  
 Procuraduría General de la República  
 Reforma 211-213, Col. Cuauhtémoc,  
 C.P. 06500, México D.F., México  
 Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx  
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General /  
 Estimada Señora Procuradora**

**And copies to:**  
Movimiento Agrario Indígena Zapatista  
 Email: maizmixtec@yahoo.com.mx

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Between November 2009 and September 2010, San Juan Copala, a community located in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, was besieged by armed men belonging to a local Indigenous organization, Social Welfare Union for the Triqui Region (Unión para el Bienestar Social de la Región Triqui, UBISORT) which is allied to the then ruling party in the state, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI). Several local residents were killed or wounded in this period but the armed groups continued to operate with impunity. The state authorities failed to take action to prevent and punish abuses, leaving the population of San Juan Copala vulnerable to attack and without access to basic services for several months.

On 27 April 2010, men belonging to an armed group reportedly linked to state and municipal authorities shot dead Mexican human rights defender Bety Cariño Trujillo and Finnish human rights observer Jyri Antero Jaakkola. Both activists were part of a humanitarian convoy that was trying to reach the remote Triqui Indigenous community of San Juan Copala, in order to deliver food and medicine and to document the human rights situation. All the other members of the convoy, around 25 people, survived the attack but some of them suffered gunshot wounds and were detained and questioned by the assailants for around one hour before being released. Some members of the convoy fled the region on foot while others were forced to hide from the armed group before being rescued.

Bety Cariño was head of the “Working Together” Community Support Centre (Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unidos, CACTUS) in the city of Huajuapán de León, Oaxaca state. She ran workshops to promote women’s rights in the local Indigenous communities and had supported many of these women in their effort to set up community radio stations. Bety Cariño had also campaigned for truth and justice in the killing of two community radio broadcasters, Felicitas Martínez and Teresa Bautista, in San Juan Copala, in 2008. Jyri Jaakkola was a member of the Finnish organization Uusi Tuuli (New Wind) and had campaigned on climate change, fair trade and food security in Finland and beyond. He was carrying out research on sustainable agriculture and Indigenous customs in the state of Oaxaca. He used to blog about his findings and his experiences from the field.

In September 2012 a local judge issued arrest warrants for 14 people who are believed to be involved in the killing of Bety Cariño and Jyri Jaakkola. Two of the suspects have subsequently been arrested and one has died. Eleven people remain at large. Federal and state authorities have repeatedly promised effective protection measures to the witnesses and survivors of the attack, but so far implementation has been limited and inadequate.

Armed groups have operated with impunity in the Triqui Indigenous area of Oaxaca state for many years, taking advantage of community divisions and striving to impose political control. The Triqui region is one of the poorest in Mexico, which has resulted in mass migration of many sections of the population and local political conflicts. Local human rights organizations accused the 2004-2010 state government of exploiting community divisions and allowing armed groups to operate with impunity. State and municipal officials are believed to have financed, tolerated or even supported some of these groups. The rule of law is largely absent in the region and virtually no one has been brought to justice for any of the crimes committed, leaving much of the population vulnerable to attack and subject to the control of armed groups. The current state government, which took office in December 2010, has promised to address the problems affecting the Triqui region, but little change can be seen.

Name: Omar Esparza

Gender m/f: m

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