

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDER'S BODY FOUND AFTER 40 DAYS MISSING

Authorities found the body of Arnulfo Cerón Soriano, indigenous human rights defender, on 20 November in a clandestine grave near the city of Tlapa, Guerrero state in western Mexico. Arnulfo was a member of the Popular Mountain Front and Movement for the Freedom of Political Prisoners of the State of Guerrero (MOLPEG). He disappeared on 11 October on his way to a meeting in this city. Authorities must redouble their efforts to investigate his disappearance and death, holding those responsible to account, and ensure safety of Arnulfo's family and organizations that support him.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Héctor Astudillo Flores
Governor of the State of Guerrero
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Dear Governor,

I am shocked at the discovery of the dead body of Arnulfo Cerón Soriano. During 2019, Arnulfo and members of MOLPEG had received threatening phone calls and messages relating to their activism work. Following the arrest of suspects in Arnulfo's disappearance, family members received threatening messages, MOLPEG members noted strange persons outside their residences and Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre has observed unknown subjects staying watch outside their offices.

Yesterday state authorities announced an investigation into the death, and continuation of the investigation into Arnulfo's disappearance. These investigations must consider his work as a human rights defender in ensuring a robust enquiry.

I urge you to ensure state authorities carry out an effective investigation into the disappearance and death of Arnulfo Cerón and bring those responsible to account while guaranteeing the safety of MOLPEG members, family members of Arnulfo Cerón and staff of Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Arnulfo Cerón Soriano was an indigenous Nahua human rights defender who spent decades fighting for the rights of the indigenous population in various organizations and social movements in the mountainous region of the state of Guerrero. In 1995 he worked for 2 years in the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre. Subsequently, he worked as a private lawyer supporting the indigenous population in the area. In 2000, the international association against torture (ACAT) denounced the arbitrary detention and torture of Arnulfo Cerón by state investigative police. He was released after one and a half years in prison. Arnulfo was extremely active in the movement to demand justice for the 43 disappeared students of Ayoztinapa.

According to information documented by the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre, on Friday, 11 October 2019, at approximately 8:00pm, Arnulfo Cerón Soriano left his home to give a talk at an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) recovery centre, located in the Caltitlán neighbourhood of the city of Tlapa de Comonfort, Guerrero. He never arrived at the place and his whereabouts were unknown from that moment on. On Saturday, 12 October, at around 12:00pm the van he had been using appeared abandoned in another sector of the city, still with the keys in place. The family did not receive a ransom call.

State authorities were initially slow to activate search and investigations into the disappearance of Arnulfo, but eventually detained two possible suspects, one on 23 October and one on 6 November. Following the arrest of suspects in Arnulfo's disappearance, family members received threatening messages, MOPLEG members noted strange persons outside their residences and Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre has observed unknown subjects staying watch outside their offices.

Federal authorities from the National Search Commission involved themselves in the search efforts from 12 November onwards. Yesterday, on 20 November, after the discovery of Arnulfo's body, state authorities announced that they had initiated an investigation for homicide and would continue investigating the disappearance also.

The state of Guerrero is notorious for weak institutions and entrenched collusion between organized crime and security forces, both at a state and municipal level. Crimes of disappearance and killings of human rights defenders are shrouded in almost absolute impunity.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 December 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Arnulfo Cerón Soriano (He, him, his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a