

DATE
12/03/2010

Mr. President of Mexico
Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa
Residencia Oficial de los Pinos,
Casa Miguel Alemán, Col. San Miguel Chapultepec
C.P. 11850, México DF.
Mexico

Re: **Concerns regarding the case of lawyer Ms. Silvia Vázquez Camacho**

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents around one million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

We express our concern over the situation facing Ms. Silvia Vázquez Camacho, a Mexican lawyer member of the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH).

According to our information, Ms. Silvia Vázquez Camacho, who advises victims and relatives of human rights violations as a member of the CMDPDH, among them four cases of civilians and police officers tortured in Tijuana which are currently being investigated by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) received a death threat call on 2 February 2010.

On 17 February, her parents heard sounds from outside their house and went to investigate. They saw the family's van on fire and two men fleeing. After extinguishing the fire, they saw that the window had been smashed and they found the remains of a Molotov cocktail inside, which had been used to set the fire.

Ms. Silvia Vázquez Camacho has been documenting human rights violations of other criminal suspects held in the military base in Tijuana, including torture or other ill-treatment.

The above-mentioned acts seem to us aimed at her professional activity, in particular her work defending the human rights.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

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Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE urges the Mexican authorities to take immediate and effective steps to investigate the threats against Ms. Silvia Vázquez Camacho and her relatives and bring those responsible to justice, and also to guarantee her protection and that of all lawyers in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice. We urge you also to ensure that all actions and threats against lawyers for the legitimate exercise of their professional duties are immediately and effectively stopped.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JMD', written over a horizontal line.

JOSÉ-MARÍA DAVÓ-FERNÁNDEZ
President