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Mexico: Police harassment against members of the 9N Victims Committee

The trial of 14 police officers implicated in acts of violence against human rights defenders, protesters and journalists during protests on 9 November 2020, began on 4 May 2021. The police officers are facing charges for their use of violence against human rights defenders, journalists and peaceful protesters during the protest against femicide and gender based violence. In the weeks leading up to the trial, the **9N Victims Committee** formed following the incidents of 9 November and has recorded a notable increase in the number of incidents of aggression, threats, police harassment and attacks on social media against its members.

[The 9N Victims Committee](#) is a collective of feminists, students, teachers and victims of violence that was established following the protest against femicide and gender based violence on 9 November 2020 in Cancún for those seeking justice for the victims of police violence and excessive use of force during the protests. The Committee is currently comprised of 13 human rights defenders, ten women and three men, who for more than five months have been seeking accountability, access to justice and guarantees of non-repetition. Since the events of 9 November 2020, victims pursuing collective justice have been subjected to harassment and surveillance by police officers, with patrol cars regularly circling around their homes, taking photos and videos of them, and following them on their daily routes.

On 9 November 2020, a peaceful protest in response to the femicide of Bianca Alejandrina Lorenzana Alvarado "Alexis", and in anticipation of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women later that month, took place in Cancún. During the protest, at least 40 municipal police officers of Benito Juárez – responsible for the operation of the Single State Force (Mando Único Estatal) for Quintana Roo – fired gun shots into the air and towards the ground in an attempt to disperse the demonstration, then taking place outside the City Hall. In their efforts to disperse the crowd, the officers detained seven women participating in the protest, who reported being physically assaulted by the police officers inside the Municipal Palace, where they had been taken by the officers following their arrest outside City Hall. Two journalists and woman human rights defender and activist **Wendy Galarza** were seriously injured by the shots fired by the police officers.

In the weeks leading up to the trial of the 14 police officers charged for their conduct during the protest, members of the 9N Victims Committee have reported an increase in and intensification of acts of intimidation against them, including harassment, threats via phone and WhatsApp from different phone numbers, and harassment on social media, including allegations of inciting disturbances. The threats have been reported to the Cancún Public Prosecutor's Office, but no follow-up has been reported to date.

On 29 April 2021, the daughter of one of the Committee members noticed that unknown individuals were circling her house and taking photos, as well as taking photos of the woman human rights defender. The following day, the son of the same Committee member, spotted two men in civilian

clothes hanging around outside the house in a threatening nature. On 30 April 2021, state police officers reportedly photographed the woman human rights defender's house, claiming that they were there to provide security measures, despite the fact that she has refused to receive any state protection measures.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the harassment, threats and online attacks against members of the 9N Victim's Committee, which appear to be directly related to the efforts of the group's members to ensure justice, accountability and guarantees of non-repetition in response to the police violence during the protest on 9 November 2020 outside Cancún City Hall and their defence of human rights, particularly the rights of the victims and also victims of femicide in the State. The increase in acts of intimidation and harassment against the Committee members in concurrence with the hearings in the case against 14 the police officers is particularly concerning, as is the harassment against the members in reprisal for their efforts to seek redress. Front Line Defenders condemns the consequent stigmatization the human rights defenders from the 9N Victim's Committee have been subjected to by the media, as well as on social media and is seriously concerned for the safety and integrity of the human rights defenders and their families.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mexico to:

1. Guarantee an impartial investigation into the events that took place during and since the protest on 9 November 2020, as well as to guarantee access to justice for the victims and human rights defenders and journalists who were assaulted by police officers during the protest;
2. Bring those responsible to justice, in compliance with international standards;
3. Adopt all necessary measures, in consultation with human rights defenders, to guarantee their physical and psychological integrity and safety, as well as that of their family members and legal representatives;
4. Guarantee that human rights defenders in Mexico can continue their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and without restrictions, including judicial or police harassment.