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Mexico: harassment, surveillance and threats against environmental rights defender Diana Bobadilla Martínez

On the night of 31 August 2020, the municipal police of Metepec in the State of Mexico, carried out repeated patrols around the home of woman environmental rights defender **Diana Bobadilla Martínez**, photographing the outside her home. This was the latest in a series of threats that the human rights defender had been receiving since mid-August 2020, including a court summons related to her participation in a peaceful protest in October 2019.

Diana Bobadilla Martínez is a woman environmental rights defender from the municipality of Metepec in the State of Mexico. She is the spokesperson of the [Abracemos el Parque la Pila Collective](#), a social movement preserving the environmental integrity of the San José La Pilita Park located in the Toluca Valley in Metepec. Diana Bobadilla is also the co-founder and president of the [Xihmai Foundation](#), a non-profit youth association, established to promote environmental justice in Mexico. She is currently the Assistant Director of [MYWORLD MÉXICO](#), an initiative of the United Nations Action Campaign for the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 agenda).

On 31 August 2020, Metepec municipal police officers carried out numerous patrols around the home of Diana Bobadilla. With their vehicle lights switched off, they passed by her home and took photos of the defender. Previously, on 28 August 2020, Diana Bobadilla and **Oscar Campiran**, who is also a member of the Abracemos el Parque la Pila Collective made a formal request to join the Protection Mechanism for Defenders and Journalists. On 22 August 2020, Oscar Campiran had received a text message on his mobile phone with a death threat directed against him and Diana Bobadilla.

On 13 August 2020, Diana Bobadilla was served a summons by the Metepec municipal police to appear before the Prosecutor's Office. During the visit the police officers intimidated the defender and her family, banging on her gates and using unsavoury language. The summons is related to a charge filed against her for "attacking roads and means of transportation". The accusation relates to her participation in a peaceful demonstration on 21 November 2019 protesting against the harassment of members of the Abracemos el Parque la Pila Collective. Other members of the Collective were summonsed on the same charge two weeks prior.

The criminalisation of members of the Abracemos el Parque la Pila Collective, began following the setting up of a peaceful protest camp on 12 October 2019 at the entrance of the San José La Pilita Park. The camp was set up in opposition to the City Council of Metepec's approval of the construction of a National Guard headquarters in the Park. On 25 October 2019, protesters at the camp were confronted and intimidated by heavily armed members of a tactical public security wing of the police authorities known as the 'Panther group'. They were reportedly accompanied by members of the Attorney General's Office and other public officials. The incident occurred when the public officials visited San José La Pilita Park, claiming they were looking into felling a tree in the location. After their visit, the Director of Public Services accused the defenders of threatening them with broomsticks.

On 21 November 2019, **Verónica Hernández** and **Guillermo Sánchez** were arbitrarily detained and physically attacked by members of the Pantera group in the prison. They were held incommunicado for more than six hours. That same day, the defenders Diana Bobadilla and Oscar Campiran were notified of the complaint against them for the crime of "dispossession", while they were at the Metepec police station requesting information about the status of Verónica Hernández and Guillermo Sánchez. The charges were derived from a lawsuit filed by the Director of Public Services of the Municipality. After discovering that Verónica Hernández and Guillermo Sánchez had been arbitrary detained, residents of

the area and other members of the Collective extended their protest by blocking Avenida Tecnológico (a connection between the municipality of Metepec, with Toluca and Tenango del Valle). Following this protest, a second investigation was launched into Diana Bobadilla, Oscar Campiran and other members of the Collective, ultimately leading to them being charged with “attacking roads and means of transport”, a charge which could allow authorities to place them in preventive detention

The camp remained in place until the end of January 2020, when the National Guard announced that they would withdraw their plans to build their headquarters in the park. Since just prior to 18 August 2020, when the Mayor of Metepec approved the revocation of the agreement, Diana Bobadilla and other members of the Collective have reportedly been subjected to acts of intimidation by municipal authorities and death threats from anonymous persons.

Front Line Defenders expresses serious concern about the threats, surveillance, harassment and acts of intimidation against the environmental defender Diana Bobadilla and other members of the Abracemos el Parque la Pila Collective. Front Line Defenders believes that these incidents are part of a broad strategy of intimidation against environmental rights defenders aimed at discouraging and criminalising their legitimate work in Mexico.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mexico to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against the Ms. Diana Bobadilla and other members of the Abracemos el Parque la Pila Collective, which appear to be in retaliation for their work in defence of the environment;
2. Initiate an immediate, exhaustive and impartial investigation into the death threats, harassment, surveillance and intimidation by public officials against the members of the Abracemos el Parque la Pila Collective, in order to guarantee their protection, physical and psychological safety and integrity, and bring those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee that all human rights defenders, including environmental rights defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of restrictions or reprisals in Mexico.