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Mexico: Disappearance of human rights defender Dr. Ernesto Sernas García

On 10 May 2018, human rights defender and university professor, **Dr. Ernesto Sernas García** disappeared in San Agustín de las Juntas, Oaxaca. His disappearance coincides with a decisive moment in a criminal procedure against 23 activists he is legally representing.

[Dr. Ernesto Sernas García](#) is a Constitutional Law professor at Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca and had been legally representing 23 activists, members of Sol Rojo, a left-wing labour rights organisation, that were arbitrarily detained in 2015 and accused of terrorism and carrying explosives. Although they have been released, the criminal procedure against them is ongoing. At the time of his disappearance, Dr. Ernesto Sernas Garcia was about to submit evidence that could have proved irregular criminal procedures and human rights violations against the 23 activists.

Local human rights organisations have criticised the government for its lack of a meaningful response to Dr. Ernesto Sernas Garcia's disappearance. The government has not informed Dr. Ernesto Sernas Garcia's family about having opened an investigation and has not publicly addressed the disappearance.

The lack of effective investigations into attacks against human rights defenders, and the failure to sanction the perpetrators and provide adequate protection has generated a climate of impunity that prevents human rights work and provides an opportunity for attacks to be carried out.

According to reports provided by local organisations, Oaxaca is the second most dangerous state to carry out human rights work, and responsible for almost 60% of all recorded attacks against women human rights defenders in Mexico. So far in 2018, there have been at least 28 attacks against human rights defenders in Oaxaca, including three killings of indigenous defenders.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the disappearance of Dr. Ernesto Sernas García, as it believes his disappearance is linked to his legitimate human rights activities. Front Line Defenders expresses further concern at the climate of impunity and the lack of a safe environment for human rights defenders in Mexico.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mexico to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of human rights defender Dr. Ernesto Sernas García, with a view to ensuring his protection and release, publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Mexico are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.