

8 September 2021

Mexico: New attacks against woman human rights defender Paula Rojas Nieto and relatives searching for missing persons in Guanajuato

On 3 September 2021, at least twenty members of the National Guard, forcibly and without a warrant, entered the home of a woman human rights defender **Paula Rojas Nieto**, and carried out a violent raid during which personal items were confiscated and she and several of her family members were attacked.

[Paula Rojas Nieto](#) is a woman human rights defender and searcher for missing persons in León the state of Guanajuato. In July 2020, her husband Fernando Martínez was disappeared by alleged members of the Silao Police and State Urban Police. The woman human rights defender found her husband dead one month after his disappearance and since then she has been part of the search groups in Guanajuato with which she investigates cases of missing persons and advocates for truth and justice on their behalf.

On 3 September 2021, almost 20 officers of the National Guard violently entered Paula Rojas Nieto's residence in León, Guanajuato claiming that they were there responding to an anonymous complaint. No warrant was shown to the residents of the house by the officers. Upon entering the house, members of the National Guard damaged the interior and confiscated a mobile phone belonging to the woman human rights defender's brother. During the raid, the officers also attacked and beat three members of the family (including a minor), and threatened to kidnap them. Unfortunately, this is not the first time Paula Rojas Nieto has been targeted as a result of her human rights work. In July 2020, the woman human rights defender was threatened and subject to criminalisation attempts by officers of the National Guard.

Organisations and collectives in Guanajuato have reported that since last year there has been an increase in the number of attacks and threats against family members and collectives searching for disappeared persons in the state. Front Line Defenders is concerned that in the past threats against human rights defenders and searchers have had fatal outcomes, as in the case of woman human rights defender and searcher [Rosario Zavala Aguilar](#) who, prior to her murder on 14 October 2020, had faced harassment and threats by the authorities.

Front Line Defenders has [strongly condemned](#) the killings, attacks and threats faced by those carrying out the legitimate work of searching for disappeared persons in Guanajuato. The organisation reiterates its concern about the climate of insecurity and hostility faced by those who carry out search activities and stands in solidarity with the searchers' collectives as they are often the ones who provide key information to the authorities on serious human rights violations.

Front Line Defenders urges the Mexican authorities to:

1. Conduct an impartial investigation into the attacks and threats against family members and members of collectives searching for missing persons in Guanajuato, with the intent of bringing those responsible to justice in compliance with international human rights standards;

2. Guarantee that human rights defenders in Mexico and all members of collectives searching for missing persons are able to continue their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and without restrictions, including judicial harassment and physical attacks;
3. Adopt all necessary measures, in consultation with the searching families and human rights defenders, to guarantee their physical and psychological integrity and safety, as well as that of their families and legal representatives.

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