



DAY OF THE
IMPRISONED
WRITER

pen

**PEN INTERNATIONAL
WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE**

**DAY OF THE IMPRISONED WRITER
15 NOVEMBER 2013**

**Dina Meza
Honduras
Human rights defender and journalist**



Dina Meza
(Source: Frontline Defenders)

“The streets filled with screams and the walls with protest messages because bullets and clubs were being used to silence those who had decided to speak out. Behind this we find a justice system manipulated to imprison those who persist [in protesting], while to the rhythm of injustice a circle of disinformation stigmatises them.”¹

Excerpt from [Vamos a portarnos mal: protesta social y libertad de expresion en América Latina](#) (Let's misbehave: social protest and freedom of expression in Latin America) (Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Bogotá, 2011).

Dina Meza, an award-winning journalist, human rights defender and author, has been the victim of harassment and threats since 2006 which have not been properly investigated, while national protection mechanisms for journalists are ineffective. PEN International believe that she is targeted for exercising her right to free expression and that her physical security is at risk. The organisation is calling for these threats to be investigated and for the Honduran authorities to provide adequate protection to Dina Meza.

Meza began her work as a human rights defender in 1989 after one of her brothers, a carpenter who was part of an agricultural collective with connections to the *campesino* (rural worker) movement, was abducted by security forces and detained incommunicado

for a week, during which time he was tortured and accused of being a guerilla. She currently works as a writer for defensoresenlinea.com, the website of the Honduran human rights NGO Committee of Relatives of the Detainees and Disappeared in Honduras (Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras, COFADEH), where she is director of digital and alternative media. Meza also presents and produces COFADEH's weekly radio programme called *Voces Against Forgetting* (*Voces contra el Olvido*) broadcast by the opposition station Radio Globo. In 2007, she was the recipient of Amnesty International UK's Special Award for Human Rights Journalism Under Threat. Meza is the author of the Honduras chapter in [*Vamos a portarnos mal: protesta social y libertad de expresión en América Latina*](#) (*Let's misbehave: social protest and freedom of expression in Latin America*) (Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Bogotá, 2011).

“Am I scared? My great problem is that I am scared of doing nothing because my children need a different country. I cannot give my children a country as Honduras is now. We need to fight, because my country needs a different situation. It needs justice, democracy, freedom of expression and equality.”

(From an interview with Dina Meza in *Amnesty Magazine*, Summer 2013, Issue 177).

Since 2006, Meza has reported being followed, watched, threatened and her communications intercepted. She has been the beneficiary of precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights since 2006 but these have had little effect.

In February 2012, Meza received a number of messages threatening her with sexual violence and death signed by *Comando Álvarez Martínez*, a pseudonym which has often been used when sending threats to journalists and human rights defenders since the 2009 coup d'état. One of the messages referred to the Bajo Aguán region whose land conflicts Meza often covers. At various points in the same year, she and her sons were subject to surveillance and further threats. In November, her 19-year-old son was followed and threatened by an armed man.

The threats and surveillance that she was subject to in 2012 led to Meza leaving Honduras for a few months in early 2013. While Meza was studying at York University's Centre for Applied Human Rights as part of their Protective Fellowship scheme, her children were forced to leave Tegucigalpa for a week due to a suspicious looking man keeping watch outside her younger son's school.

After returning to Honduras in May 2013, Meza reports that she has not received any further threats, but continues to be subject to harassment and surveillance. She reports having been followed on at least four occasions between May and August. On 12 August Meza reported being the victim of a suspected attempt to abduct her. This incident led to her changing her daily travel plans and routes.

On 21 September, Meza reports that an unknown man with military-style short hair was keeping watch by her home as her children were about to go out in the family car. Concerned by the man's presence, the family cancelled the trip. After returning the car to the garage they realised that one of the tyres had been slashed. A visitor to the family reported being followed by the man after leaving the building that same day.

Meza suspects that her telephones are tapped owing to regular interference on the line. She has not reported any of the incidents which she has experienced since her return to Honduras in May 2013 to the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights Defenders as she has been told that the office lacks the resources to investigate.

Background

At least 28 journalists have been murdered in Honduras since the June 2009 coup d'état that deposed former president José Manuel Zelaya, while many more have come under attack. Very few of these crimes are properly investigated and impunity is the norm. PEN International is currently working with PEN Canada and the University of Toronto Law Faculty International Human Rights Programme to finalise a major report on this situation and the sources of impunity, which we plan to launch in early 2014.

Please send appeals:

- Urging that all reports of attacks, threats, harassment and surveillance of journalists, including Dina Meza, be promptly and thoroughly investigated and that anyone found responsible is brought to justice;
- Calling for Dina Meza to be granted adequate protection from harm;
- Provide the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights Defenders with sufficient resources so that the office can carry out its mandate.

Appeals to:

Ana Pineda
Minister of Justice and
Human Rights
Secretaría de Estado en los
Despachos de Justicia y
Derechos Humanos de la
República de Honduras
Col. Lomas del Mayab
Ave. República de Costa
Rica
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email:
contacto@sjdh.gob.hn

Rosa Amalia Seaman Sheran
Special Prosecutor for
Human Rights Defenders
Office of the Fiscal de
Derechos Humanos
Colonia Lomas del Guijarro
Edificio Plaza II, primer piso
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email:
rosaseamanhn@yahoo.com

Arturo Corrales Álvarez
Minister of Security
Secretaría de Seguridad
Cuartel de Casamata
Tegucigalpa, M.D.C.,
Honduras
11101
Email:
doriselsonity@yahoo.com

Copies to:

Ramón Custodio López
Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos
Oficina Central
Colonia Florencia Norte
Boulevard Suyapa
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
11101
Email: custodiolopez@conadeh.hn

Please also send copies of your appeals to the Honduran Embassy in your country.
See <http://embassy.goabroad.com/embassies-of/honduras>

PUBLICITY

PEN members are encouraged to:

- Publish articles and opinion pieces in your national or local press highlighting the high levels of impunity for attacks against journalists like Dina Meza in Honduras.
- Organise public events, stage readings, press conferences or demonstrations.
- Share information about Dina Meza and your campaigning activities for her via social media

Remember to let us know about your activities and to send us reports about them so that we can share them with other Centres.

*For further details please contact Tamsin Mitchell at the Writers in Prison Committee
London Office: PEN International, Brownlow House, 50-51 High Holborn, London WC1V
6ER Tel: +44 (0) 207 405 0338 Fax +44 (0) 207 405 0339 email: Tamsin.mitchell@pen-international.org*

¹ Spanish original: *“Las calles se llenaron de gritos y las paredes de mensajes de protesta, porque las balas y los garrotes quisieron callar a quienes decidieron hablar. A la vuelta se encuentra un sistema de justicia preso a llevar a la cárcel a los que persistan, al compás de la injusticia se mueve un cerco desinformativo que estigmatiza.”*