

## STATEMENT

### **IM-DEFENSORAS CONDEMNS ATTACKS AND THREATS AGAINST MEZTLI SARABIA REYNA, OF “OCTOBER 28TH” UPVA IN PUEBLA (MEXICO)**

**-We denounce the constant harassment, criminalization and threats faced by women rights defenders belonging to “October 28th” UPVA**

**-We demand protection for the life and integrity of Meztli Sarabia Reyna, Rita Amador and other “October 28th” UPVA members**

*Mesoamerica, April 8, 2016* - The 691 women rights defenders of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua who make up the **Mesoamerican initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders** hereby condemn the recent attacks and death threats leveled against defender **Meztli Sarabia Reyna**, who belongs to the October 28th Peoples’ Street Vendors Union (UPVA), in Puebla, México.

The defender reported that last April 5, while she was on her way home, she and her comrade **Vicente Carrillo**, who had stopped to go into a store, were intercepted by two men who introduced themselves as judicial police and demanded that they identify themselves, arguing that the car had been reported as stolen. One of them, a hefty, dark-skinned fellow around six feet tall, wearing a gray sports T-shirt, pointed his pistol at **Meztli Sarabia** and said: “You’re fucked.” When **Vicente Carrillo**, who was struggling with the other assailant, saw that the defender was being held at gunpoint, he allowed the alleged agent to push him into the back of the car, while the other agresor took the wheel and drove the van towards North 9th Street.

The assailants began to shout, telling **Meztli Sarabia**: “You’re done for. Your family’s in jail and you’ve got an arrest warrant.” They told **Vicente Carrillo**: “We know you’re the treasurer of the Sarabia family. You’re fucked, too.” Right then, they handed the defender the cell phone of one of the supposed agents and told her to talk to their commander. When she took the phone, a voice shouted at her: “You’ve had it.” Then the defender dropped the phone and began to shout, at which time the men threatened her, saying: “Shut up, you damn bitch or we’re going to kill you.” When they got to the corner of Northern Boulevard heading for the Hidalgo market, they realized that an operation was in full swing and made a sharp turn, taking North 9<sup>th</sup> Street once again. When they got to West 80<sup>th</sup>, they turned right and then made another right on North 7<sup>th</sup> Street, then took the first private street, West 78<sup>th</sup>, and stopped the van. The attackers said, “Stay down. You’re done for.” They took Vicente Carrillo’s briefcase, both of their cell phones, the keys to the vehicle and the wallet with Carrillo’s identification. When **Meztli Sarabia** started to raise her head, they hit her hard on the back, saying, “Stay down, you damned bitch.” After 15 or 20 minutes, the defender and her companion got up, got out of the vehicle and ran to her home, which was nearby. It is important to note that a complaint was filed detailing the events in the **Attorney General’s Office of the State of Puebla** with the number AP-563/2016/norte.

It should be noted that **Meztli Sarabia’s** father, **Ruben Sarabia Sánchez**, and her brothers **Atl Rubén** and **Xihuel Sarabia Reyna** are now imprisoned for political motives. Likewise, as previously denounced by **IM-Defensoras** and the **National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico**, **Rita Amador**, a historic leader of the **UPVA** and the wife of **Meztli Sarabia’s** father, has been subjected to a number of attacks in the last few months, including criminalization, defamation, media lynching and several death threats, the last of which she received on March 28<sup>th</sup>.



## INICIATIVA MESOAMERICANA de Mujeres Defensoras DE DERECHOS HUMANOS

The situation of criminalization and repeated attacks and death threats faced by UPVA members is of great concern, especially in the cases of **Meztli Sarabia** and **Rita Amador**. Accordingly, **IM-Defensoras** holds the federal authorities and those of the State of Mexico responsible for any type of attack against the two women defenders, and demands the following::

- ✦ Immediate implementation of effective protective measures to safeguard the lives and physical integrity of **Meztli Sarabia, Rita Amador**, their families and their organization.
- ✦ A swift, complete and expeditious investigation aimed at sanctioning the masterminds and perpetrators of the attacks against **Meztli Sarabia and Vicente Carrillo**, as well as the threats against **Rita Amador**.
- ✦ The installation of dialogue tables with **Rita Amador**, her organization and state and federal authorities, to put an end to the escalation of attacks and criminalization that keeps four UPVA members in prison and to close the preliminary investigations of the defender and members of her organization.



*Iniciativa Nicaragüense de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos*