

# URGENT ACTION

## DEFENDER'S BODY FOUND AFTER 40 DAYS MISSING

Authorities found the body of indigenous human rights defender, Arnulfo Cerón Soriano, on 20 November in a clandestine grave near the city of Tlapa, Guerrero state, western Mexico. Arnulfo was a member of the Popular Mountain Front and Movement for the Freedom of Political Prisoners of the State of Guerrero (MOLPEG). He disappeared on 11 October on his way to a meeting in the city. Authorities must redouble their efforts to investigate his disappearance and death, hold those responsible to account, and ensure the safety of Arnulfo's family and the organisations that supported him.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*Héctor Astudillo Flores*  
Governor of the State of Guerrero  
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Chilpancingo, Guerrero  
Fax: +52-1-747 4719801 ext. 9801  
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[secretariageneral@guerrero.gob.mx](mailto:secretariageneral@guerrero.gob.mx)

Dear Governor,

*I am shocked at the discovery of the dead body of indigenous activist, Arnulfo Cerón Soriano. During 2019, Arnulfo and members of MOLPEG received threatening phone calls and messages relating to their activism work. Following the arrest of suspects in Arnulfo's disappearance, his family members received threatening messages. MOLPEG members also noted strange persons outside their residences, and the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre has observed unknown subjects staying watch outside their offices.*

*Yesterday state authorities announced an investigation into the death, and continuation of the investigation into Arnulfo's disappearance. These investigations must consider his work as a human rights defender, in ensuring a robust enquiry.*

***I urge you to ensure state authorities carry out an effective investigation into the disappearance and death of Arnulfo Cerón and bring those responsible to account, while guaranteeing the safety of MOLPEG members, family members of Arnulfo Cerón and staff of Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Arnulfo Cerón Soriano was an indigenous Nahua human rights defender, who spent decades fighting for the rights of the indigenous population, in various organisations and social movements in the mountainous region in the state of Guerrero. Starting in 1995, he worked at the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre for two years. Subsequently, he worked as a private lawyer supporting the indigenous population in the area. In 2000, the international association against torture (ACAT) denounced the arbitrary detention and torture of Arnulfo Cerón by state investigative police. He was released after one and a half years in prison. Arnulfo was extremely active in the movement demanding justice for the 43 disappeared students of Ayotzinapa.

According to information documented by the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre, on Friday, 11 October 2019, at approximately 8:00pm, Arnulfo Cerón Soriano left his home to give a talk at an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) recovery centre, located in the Caltitlán neighbourhood in Tlapa de Comonfort, Guerrero. He never arrived at the recovery centre, and his whereabouts remained unknown. On Saturday, 12 October, at around 12:00pm the van he had been using appeared abandoned in another part of the city, with the keys still in place. His family did not receive a ransom call.

State authorities were initially slow to begin investigations into Arnulfo's disappearance, but eventually detained two possible suspects, one on 23 October and one on 6 November. Following the arrest of suspects in Arnulfo's disappearance, family members began receiving threatening messages, MOPLEG members noted strange persons outside their residences, and the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre observed unknown subjects watching their offices.

Federal authorities from the National Search Commission involved themselves in the search efforts from 12 November onwards. On 20 November, after the discovery of Arnulfo's body, state authorities announced that they had initiated a homicide investigation, and would continue investigating his disappearance.

The state of Guerrero is notorious for weak institutions and entrenched collusion between organised crime and security forces, both at a state and municipal level. Crimes of disappearance and killings of human rights defenders are shrouded in almost absolute impunity.

### **PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish**

You can also write in your own language.

### **PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 December 2019**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

### **NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Arnulfo Cerón Soriano (He, him, his)**

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** n/a

**ADDITIONAL TARGETS:** Embassy of Mexico, 16 St George St, Mayfair, London W1S 1FD