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Mexico: Woman human rights defender Teresa Magueyal assassinated

On 2 May 2023, the woman human rights defender **Teresa Magueyal** was shot dead by a group of unidentified armed men while riding her bike in the area of San Miguel Octopan, in the municipality of Celaya, Guanajuato.

[Teresa Magueyal](#) was a woman human rights defender who searched for missing persons in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. On 6 April 2020, her 31 year old son José Luis Apaseo Magueyal disappeared in the town of Celaya, Guanajuato. Teresa Magueyal was part of the collective [Una Promesa por Cumplir](#), which was formed two years ago by the families of disappeared persons from various municipalities in the area of Laja-Bajío. The purpose of this collective, which is based in the municipality of Celaya, is for the families to continue the search for their loved ones given the lack of effective investigation or response from the authorities.

On the morning of 2 May 2023, Teresa Magueyal was riding her bike in the municipality of Celaya, close to the Garden of Children of San Miguel Octopan, when she was intercepted and shot by a group of unidentified armed men. This area is located 10km away from Celaya's main square, which is known to be a place where criminal groups have had territorial disputes.

The assassination of Teresa Magueyal has been reported to the State Search Commission of Guanajuato, which has organised at least two generalised searches to investigate this event, in the same community where her son disappeared in 2020. This event has occurred in a context of widespread femicide, marked by impunity and a lack of effective mechanisms to protect women human rights defenders. The State of Guanajuato is among the most lethal states for human rights defenders searching for disappeared persons in Mexico. The Platform for Peace and Justice in Guanajuato has reported five more assassinations of human rights defenders in the State, that were searching for the disappeared ones since October 2020. Front Line Defenders has reported in its 2022 Global Analysis the killing of eight human rights defenders that search for disappeared persons, six of whom were women.

Furthermore, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has identified these attacks and assassinations against human rights defenders as “reprisals for their search of disappeared persons.” Special Procedures of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have also sent at least four communications since 2020 to the Government of Mexico expressing their concern over the safety of women searchers in Guanajuato.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern at the acts of aggression towards women human rights defenders, as it is presumed that these are linked to their legitimate activity in defence of human rights, particularly the right to know the whereabouts of the missing and the disappeared. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concern regarding the climate of impunity for perpetrators and lack of protection for human rights defenders in Mexico.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Mexico to:

1. Initiate an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Teresa Magueyal, in order to identify those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal, and apply the sanctions provided by Mexican law;

2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the security, and the physical and psychological integrity of the members of the collective Una Promesa por Cumplir, and of all human rights defenders that search for disappeared persons in Mexico;
3. Take measures to put an end to attacks against human rights defenders in Mexico, so that they can continue their activities in defence of human rights without fear of reprisals, in accordance with Mexico's international human rights obligations.