

10 May 2017

Mexico: Illegal detention of human rights defender Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino

On 2 May 2017, the human rights defender, **Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino**, was illegally detained by members of the Public Security Office in Torreón Nuevo, Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. On her release, on 3 May 2017, the defender reported she had been tortured.

Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino is a member of the *Comité de Familiares de Personas Detenidas Desaparecidas del Estado de Michoacán “Alzando Voces” - COFADDEM (Committee of Relatives of Detained Persons Missing from the State of Michoacán - “Raising Voices”)*. The organisation works with the relatives, friends and companions of people who were detained and disappeared in the states of Michoacán, Veracruz, Puebla y Guerrero, due to the activities of paramilitary groups and militias, many with the support of state forces. COFADDEM calls for a stop to the disappearances, advocates for the right to truth and tries to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

On 2 May 2017, at approximately 11.40am, Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino was illegally detained by thirteen members of the Public Security Office in Torreón Nuevo, Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. During the detention, the human rights defender was restrained and one of the agents pointed a gun to her head. No arrest warrant was presented and the defender was not informed of the reason for her detention. Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino identified herself as a human rights defender, but one of the security forces shouted “*Now we are going to treat you as a criminal. I know who you are. You are the leader of a group of people. I’m going to take care of putting all the evidence together to keep you in jail*”. The agents filmed and took photos of her throughout the procedure.

The human rights defender was taken to the Public Prosecution Office of Michoacán, where she was forced to undress and do ten squats in front of a member of staff, in order to check if she had any objects inside her. She was held in a cell under unhealthy conditions, with a strong smell of ammonia and no ventilation. Afterwards, at approximately 5.00pm, a public prosecutor and two attorneys attempted to coerce her into signing a false statement, in which she accepted her responsibility for the crimes of damage and burglary, and where it was noted that only two police officers (and not thirteen, as previously stated) participated in her detention.

Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino informed the public officials that she is diabetic and dependent on insulin, but they denied her the necessary medical care for her condition. At approximately 6.00pm, the human rights defender’s sister, **Janahuy Paredes Lachino**, also a member of COFADDEM, concluded that her sister was arrested, due to witness reports. After being initially denied the possibility to see Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino, she managed to talk to her sister for ten minutes, and she noticed bruises and swelling in both wrists due to the defender having been deliberately handcuffed too tightly.

On 3 May 2017, at approximately 1.00am, the human rights defender was released without charges. The authorities maintained that the arrest was due to the report of a robbery close to the place where she was detained.

Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino is a beneficiary of the *Mecanismo de Protección para Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas (Protection Mechanism for Human Rights*

Defenders and Journalists), a programme created by the Mexican government to protect those who are threatened due to their work in the defence of human rights. Despite this, the federal and local governments have been unable to ensure the security of the human rights defender to continue her work in defence of the right to the truth.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Juan E. Méndez, has emphasized several times that torture and ill-treatment are widespread practice in security forces in order to obtain confessions or as a punishment against crimes' suspects. "It occurs especially from the moment when a person is detained until he or she is brought before a judge", according to a [report](#) from 2014 issued by the Rapporteur. The practices include asphyxiation, sexual violence, electric shocks, death treats, beatings and psychological torture.

Front Line Defenders condemns the illegal detention and reported tortured of human rights defender, Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino, since it believes that the actions were carried out due to her work with COFADDEM.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mexico to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the illegal detention of **Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino** and her reports of torture, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures, in consultation with the defender, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Cristina Erandeni Parades Lachino and all other members of COFADDEM;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Mexico are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.