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International and Mexican Human Rights Organisations express their sympathies over the death of Felipe Arreaga Sánchez, well-known social and environmental activist from Guerrero, Mexico.

On September 16, a small public bus crashed into the quad bike upon which Felipe Arreaga was travelling in his home municipality of Petatlán, Guerrero. The driver of the bus then fled the scene. Felipe, aged 60, died a few hours later from injuries suffered during the crash.

Felipe Arreaga was co-founder of the Organisation of Peasant Environmentalists of the Sierra de Petatlán (OCESP), which actively supported the 1998 roadblock in the region, denouncing the excessive felling of forests and its consequences for the environment and the lives of the local population. As a result of these actions, which led to a reduction in logging, various members of the OCESP were assassinated. The Mexican Armed Forces detained their leader, Rodolfo Montiel, and another member of the organisation, Teodoro Cabrera. Fearing for his life, Felipe fled the community and spent eight months in hiding in the mountains. In 2000, together with his wife, Celsa Valdovinos, he founded the Organisation of Women Environmentalists of the Sierra de Petatlán (OMESP).

In October 2004 he was detained and accused of murder. Despite a lack of any substantive evidence against him, he spent ten months in prison until a judge ruled that he was innocent in September 2005, during which time Amnesty International named him as a prisoner of conscience. The Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre acted as his legal representative and publicised the case internationally, whilst Greenpeace, the German Coordination for Human Rights in Mexico and the Washington Office on Latin America - among other organisations - demanded that he be released. The same year, Felipe was awarded the Chico Mendes prize for the environment by the Sierra Club and the Don Sergio Méndez Arceo prize by the organisation of the same name based in Cuernavaca. On the request of Tlachinollan, and the NGO S.O.S Bahía, in 2005 Peace Brigades International (PBI) began to accompany Felipe Arreaga and Celsa Valdovinos, as they were under threat due to their environmental work in the region. It was an honour for all those fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to know Felipe Arreaga.

In the name of the organisations signed below, we would like to offer our greatest sympathies to Celsa Valdovinos and the rest of Felipe Arreaga's family. We will continue to support the brave work of the OCESP and OMESSP in their promotion of environmental causes and the fundamental rights of the peasant population in Guerrero, continuing in the memory of the environmental activist Felipe Arreaga.

Peace Brigades International
Washington Office on Latin America
Sierra Club
Amnesty International (International Secretariat)
German Coordination for Human Rights in Mexico
Misereor
Amnesty International Italy
Amnesty International USA
Amnesty International Canada (Anglophone Section)

Greenpeace Mexico
Article 19 (Mexico and Central America)
FIAN Mexico
Amnesty International Mexico
Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre (Centro PRODH)
National Centre of Social Communication (Cencos)
Espacio DESC
Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH)
Laboratory for Analysis of Organisations and Social Movements
Institute for Security and Democracy
Cerezo Committee
Mexican Centre for Environmental Law
Human Rights Programme of the Autonomous University of Mexico City
Inter - American Association for the Defence of the Environment
Mexican Institute for Human Rights and Democracy
Mexican Network for Action Against Free Trade
Solidarity Network for a Decade Against Impunity
Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre
Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Mexico (AFADEM)
Organization of Women Ecologists of the Sierra de Petatlán (OMESP)
Workshop for Community Development (TADECO)
SOS Bahía
Viva el Río Azul
Maderas del Pueblo del Sureste
Radio Ñomndaa

