

# March-April News Bulletin from the Freedom for Nestora Salgado Campaign

**April 22, 2014**

The good news is that on Monday, March 31, 2014, a federal court in Mexico handed down an important ruling that brings indigenous leader Nestora Salgado closer to being free. It dismissed federal charges of engaging in “organized crime” brought against her as the coordinator of the community police force in her hometown of Olinalá. The court found that she was acting in her legal capacity under Guerrero state law and the traditions and customs of indigenous peoples there.

The bad news is that this U.S. citizen and Renton, Washington, resident remains in El Rincon, a maximum-security prison in Tepic, Nayarit, where she has been held under dreadful conditions since August 21, 2013. Salgado still faces trial on the specious grounds that arrests made by community police officers working under her supervision constituted kidnapping under state law. Salgado’s Mexican attorneys are seeking dismissal of these remaining charges because they are false and contrary to the federal court ruling.

In addition to the criminal defense efforts, Nestora's family has requested her immediate release and protection through the aid of the Mexican National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) and the Mexican government's Human Rights Defenders Unit, without any results.



## **Prominent politicians and others speak out on Nestora's behalf**

In the meantime, fourteen deputies of Mexico's senate belonging to the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) have called for an investigation into Nestora's treatment as a political prisoner. (Seven of them are shown above at a press conference with

Nestora's sister Clotilde.) Their public support is significant because they belong to the same political party as the governor of Guerrero, who many believe is responsible for Nestora's arrest.

One of the deputies' counterparts in this country, U.S. Representative Adam Smith, sent a [letter](#) to Secretary of State John Kerry on April 18, 2014. It expresses extreme concern about the "harsh treatment of Ms. Salgado by Mexican authorities and the brutal prison conditions she is experiencing" and about their "refusal to allow her the appropriate medical treatment and exercise she needs for her neuropathy." Smith represents Washington's 9th Congressional District, where Salgado lives with her family. Smith urges Secretary Kerry to "ensure that Ms. Salgado is afforded due process by the Mexican judicial system." In this case, "due process" requires no less than Nestora's immediate release because the charges against her have no basis in law or in fact, as noted by the federal court.

The deputies' action and the letter from Congressman Smith are part of an outpouring of support that Salgado has received internationally, including from organized labor in the U.S. Activists on both sides of the border have been moralized by the militancy of unionized teachers in Mexico who chanted "Free Nestora" as they blocked the highway between Mexico City and Acapulco for 5 hours in early March.

Further evidence of the growing popular support for Nestora is her receipt of the 2014 Don Sergio Mendez Arceo Human Rights Award. Bishop Mendez Arceo was a founder of the liberation theology movement and was known for his work on behalf of poor and working people. Nestora is a strong advocate of indigenous peoples' and women's rights, as is evident in her [International Women's Day statement](#) that was read at a number of events in Mexico and the U.S.

Other organizations that have recently added their endorsements to the campaign on Nestora's behalf are the prominent human rights association, El Centro de Derechos Humanos (El Centro Prodh), based in San Rafael, Mexico, and the United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 555, covering union grocery stores in northern Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Nestora's U.S. lawyers, Thomas Antkowiak and Alejandra Gonza, have recently been notified that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is making formal inquiries into her detention.

### **Let the U.S. Secretary of State know the time is now for his intervention**

Given all this support, it is high time for U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to intervene on Salgado's behalf. More letters urging him to do so are needed like the ones from Washington State Labor Council President Jeff [Johnson](#) and Carpenters Regional Executive Secretary-Treasurer Doug [Tweedy](#). Please send them to:

Secretary of State John Kerry

U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

## **Organizing north and south of the border**

Freedom for Nestora committees in the United States and in Mexico are working closely with Nestora's family to end this nightmare for her and other community police organizers rounded up at the same time. The committees are using a variety of means to expand public awareness of Nestora's struggle and the broader issues it raises, such as the right of indigenous communities to defend themselves. They have held press conferences, circulated petitions, obtained endorsements, organized public forums and fundraising events, and pasted up posters.

During the weekend of April 11-13, Nestora's husband spoke on campuses and at community meetings in Los Angeles, including one held by the Frente de Resistencia por Mexico, a group which advocates for the rights of immigrant tenants and workers in Los Angeles. On April 14, San Francisco Radical Women held a forum entitled "Indigenous woman leader in Mexico fights for freedom." The Seattle Freedom for Nestora Committee hosted an April 19 fundraising [fiesta](#) featuring lively dance music and some of Nestora's favorite foods prepared by her family. On April 27, the New York committee is co-sponsoring with YoSoy132-Nueva York, a Mexican immigrant rights group, a film showing of ["State Injustice Against Nestora Salgado."](#)

The Partido Obrero Socialista (POS) in Mexico and the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) in the U.S. have run regular articles and editorials on Nestora in their magazines and newspapers. They have also set up websites for the [Mexican](#) and [U.S.](#) support committees. POS supporters have put up over 100 posters for Nestora in towns where there are active community police forces. Tellingly, none have been taken down weeks later. POS militants plan to paint political murals in major cities, including Mexico City and Ciudad Juarez. They have also won considerable backing for Nestora in La Gota, Chihuahua.

It takes money to sustain a campaign of this kind. Please donate. Checks can be made out to Radical Women - Nestora Fund and mailed to Freedom for Nestora Committee, 5018 Rainier Ave S., Seattle, WA 98118.

We will keep you apprised of further developments as they occur. Please send information about efforts in your area to free Nestora for inclusion in future updates.

¡La lucha continua!

**HELP FREE NESTORA! MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!**

If you haven't already, now is the time to sign the online [Free Nestora Campaign Facebook page](#) to volunteer and to check for new developments, meetings and activities.

*This report was prepared by members of the Freedom for Nestora Committee— Seattle, Washington, U.S., Su Docekal, Coordinator*  
[FreeNestora.Seattle@gmail.com](mailto:FreeNestora.Seattle@gmail.com)  
206-953-5601

*To read the March 2014 news report on the campaign to free Nestora [click here.](#)*