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### **Mexico: Escalation of threats against the Agua Fría Community in Michoacán and human rights defender Rolando Silva Andrade**

On 18 March 2026, heavily armed men entered the **Agua Fría Community** in the Los Azufres region in Michoacán and threatened and intimidated its members. This incident is part of a pattern of attacks in recent months by organised crime actors who attempt to dispossess the Community of their territory in order to gain control of the land and forest. These threats have significantly intensified, particularly against environmental human rights defender **Rolando Silva Andrade**.

The [Comunidad de Agua Fría](#) (Agua Fría Community) is located in Los Azufres, a region of the state of Michoacán. It was formed in the 1940s and currently has around 180 residents. The community's territory is of great environmental importance, including forest ecosystems and several water sources. The Community has collectively taken responsibility for protecting the territory, organising community life, and caring for the local forest and water sources.

[Rolando Silva Andrade](#) is a human rights defender and environmentalist from the Agua Fría Community. He is known for his longstanding role in defending the forest, water, and territory from illegal logging and land grabbing by local sawmill groups colluding with organised crime, state officials, and other actors with economic interests in the area. In the Community, Rolando Silva Andrade plays a key role as a healer and moral authority, as well as an environmental defender of the local sulphur springs, an activity that is central to the social, economic, cultural, and spiritual life of the Agua Fría Community.

On 18 March 2026, three heavily armed men entered the community of Agua Fría and positioned themselves in the centre of the village. With the aim of intimidating the community members and coercing them into going to the location where the criminal group operates, and signing documents granting them ownership of the community's land. The men warned that "If you don't turn up, things will get ugly". The community decided not to go, as doing so could have put their lives at serious risk. This incident reflects the escalation of threats and attacks the Agua Fría Community has been suffering throughout February and March 2026.

In this context, environmental defender Rolando Silva Andrade has been particularly targeted. The threats began on 25 February 2026 when a group of four heavily armed men, reportedly linked to a criminal group operating in Los Azufres, went to the home of relatives of Rolando Silva Andrade in the Agua Fría Community. The men addressed the

relatives with direct threats: “Tell Rolando to hand over the land because we are going to take it; if he doesn’t, we will come for him.” The human rights defender was not at home at the time of the incident and his relatives alerted him immediately to prevent him from returning to the Community.

On 3 March 2026, four armed men arrived in the Agua Fría Community and voiced threats against Rolando Silva Andrade: “Why has Rolando not reported to us? Now we’re not just going to take him away; the offence is now more serious.” They also left a telephone number which the human rights defender was instructed to call as soon as possible.

On 16 March 2026, woman human rights defender Reyna Coello Castro, the partner of Rolando Silva Andrade, received several calls from a relative who told her that three armed men had visited him, threatening the community and demanding that they hand over the land or else “they would round up the people of the community.”

The threats explicitly declared the intention to ‘take’ Rolando Silva Andrade and other members of the community, which implies an enforced disappearance or unlawful deprivation of liberty, This is a violation that was already perpetrated in 2014 against the environmental defender Rolando García by criminal groups. The threats also indicate risks of other forms of serious violence against the lives and safety of people of Agua Fría. The threats are directly linked to the intention of criminal groups operating in the area to take control of the forest and Community’s land, with the reported aim of occupying the land, carrying out illegal logging, controlling forest resources, and using the area as a trafficking route for organised crime. All these events have forced Rolando Silva Andrade to leave the Community in order to protect his life and physical integrity.

These violations are occurring against the backdrop of an increasing presence of armed groups in the Los Azufres region. This development has been documented since December 2025 in areas near the community where illegal logging activities are taking place. Residents of Agua Fría have reported the use of firearms and explosives, as well as night-time drone flights, to both the Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA) and the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Organised Crime (FEMDO). These incidents have created an environment of systematic violence and intimidation in the community, exacerbated by the authorities’ failure to protect those defending human rights.

Human rights defender Rolando Silva Andrade and other members of the community filed complaints with the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Human Rights (FEMDH) and the FEMDO regarding the threats received in February and March 2026, and requested that Rolando Silva Andrade, his family, and the Agua Fría Community be included in the National Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists. However, to date, they have received no response regarding the reported incidents, information on the progress of the investigations, or the adoption of an approach that recognises the role of the Agua Fría Community and of Rolando Silva Andrade as human rights defenders.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the escalation of threats against the Agua Fría Community and the risks its members are facing. In particular, Front Line Defenders is concerned for the life and physical integrity of human rights defender Rolando Silva

Andrade, and fears that the community is at imminent risk of displacement and further physical violence. Front Line Defenders believes that the attacks and threats against the Agua Fria Community and human rights defender Rolando Silva Andrade are directly connected to their defence of land and territory.

### **Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Mexico to:**

1. Recognise the collective human rights defence work carried out by the Agua Fría Community and human rights defender Rolando Silva Andrade, in particular their defence of the land and environment.
2. Ensure that the Special Prosecutor's Office for Human Rights, in coordination with the Special Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime, conducts a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation to identify, prosecute, and sentence the perpetrators of the reported violations, including those who ordered the threats against the Agua Fría Community and Rolando Silva Andrade.
3. Ensure that the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists promptly assesses the case of the human rights defenders from the Agua Fría community and admits them, in order to protect their lives, physical integrity and security.
4. Guarantee that land and environmental rights defenders, particularly in areas affected by organised crime and illegal economic activities, can carry out their legitimate human rights work free from attacks and reprisals in a safe and enabling environment.

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