

Dear friends,

I'm writing to you from a prison cell in northern Mexico. The heat is intense: in these summer months it gets to 40 degrees and rising, and inside these cells, we are all sweating.

Three years: I've seen summers come and fade, people arrive at and then leave this place, and all the time my children are growing up, outside these walls. Three years of change and movement: but still I remain here. At times I must admit I've felt very tired, and defeated.

Before all this happened, I used to feel useful in society, and I loved looking after others. But then, I was tortured by Mexican police. They tortured me physically, psychologically and sexually. Then, they charged me with a crime I never committed. Those same authorities are now standing in the way of my release; they are denying me justice. They need to know that the world is now watching. And for that, I need your help: without it they will forget about me. I think many people will identify with my story. Amnesty has visited me recently, and told me about others – like Claudia Medina – whose experiences are similar to mine, and who've been released thanks to the solidarity and pressure of thousands of you around the world. I'm hopeful, and thankful.

Before all this happened, I used to take my son to swimming classes. I remember watching how all the other children would compete amongst themselves to be the fastest, or the strongest. Not my son. He didn't swim. Instead, he would float happily and freely in the middle of the pool, while the others raced past him. He would bob up and down, worry-free. I used to be concerned that he wasn't well-behaved. But then I realised how glad I was that he felt free to be the way he is. We all should be free to be ourselves. Freedom is vital for any human being. Freedom helps us breathe, it helps us live fully.

I also want to be free, free to be myself, just the way I am.

I don't want to spend another day here. I want my story to be heard, and I'm asking you, dear friends, to help me. I need your help to demand justice from the authorities, and I have faith and hope that you will.

Meanwhile, I'll be here in my cell, praying that it all works out well.

With love

Yecenia Armenta