

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NORTH COUNTY CHAPTER

PRESS RELEASE

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO RECOGNIZE PROF. MARJORIE COHN AT ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS WALK IN OCEANSIDE



On Sunday, October 18th, the North County Chapter of Amnesty International will present the 2009 *Digna Ochoa Human Rights Defender Award* to law professor Marjorie Cohn at their 21st Annual Walk for Human Rights in Oceanside. Ms. Cohn is the current President of the National Lawyer Guild and has lectured throughout the world on international human rights and U.S. foreign policy. She is a news consultant for CBS News and has provided legal commentary on BBC, CNN, MSNBC, FOX NEWS and NPR. She is the author of numerous books and articles, and has testified on government torture policy before the House Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. Professor Cohn sits on the Human Rights Committee of the Society of American Law Teachers and the Advisory Board of the U.S. Human Rights Network among several others. She was a legal observer in 1978 in Iran on behalf of the International Assn. of Democratic Lawyers and has participated in delegations to Cuba, China and Yugoslavia. She is the recipient of numerous awards and has taught law at Thomas Jefferson since 1991.

The North County Chapter is one of approximately 4,000 community chapters of the worldwide human rights organization. The local group established the human rights award in 2001 in the memory of the Human Rights attorney, Digna Ochoa y Placido, who was shot dead in her office October 19th of 2001 following several years of death threats. Ms. Ochoa worked for the Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez (PRODH) in Mexico City, where she received numerous international awards for her work defending

human rights. Her work with PRODH had included cases in which public officials, including members of the Offices of the Attorney General and the armed forces, had been implicated in serious human rights violations. She was also known for her defense of two Mexican environmentalists who were released a week after her death. Written threats were discovered by Ms. Ochoa's body stating the same fate would fall on the others if they continued their human rights work. The Mexican government ruled her death a suicide.

The North County chapter of Amnesty International is pleased to recognize the work of Professor Cohn believing she is an outstanding example of the same spirit of commitment to human rights which was exemplified by Digna Ochoa's life and work. The award will be presented at the 21st Annual Walk for Human Rights which begins at 5:30 pm at the outdoor amphitheater next to the pier in Oceanside. This year, the event will focus on "Defending the Defenders," highlighting those throughout the world involved in human rights work who now endure human rights violations as a result of that work. Other guest speakers include a former student activist and torture survivor from Guatemala, Marvyn Perez, and the Executive Director of Amnesty International USA Larry Cox, and the Western Regional Director Banafsheh Akhlaghi. The public is invited to attend and "adopt" a person for the night whose human rights have been violated and on whose behalf Amnesty is currently working. Participants can join in a name reading, take a brief, "freedom walk" for their "adoptee," and then take information home to write an appeal for their person.

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