

# *Mexican Mayor's Bodyguards Linked to Kidnapping Gang*

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Mexico City, January 19 (RHC-EFE) – A bodyguard of Monterrey Mayor Margarita Arellanes was arrested for allegedly being a member of a kidnapping gang with links to Mexico's Los Zetas drug cartel and arrest warrants have been issued for two other members of the official's security detail, media reports said Sunday.

Antonio Gonzalez Abad, a Monterrey police officer assigned to protect the mayor, was arrested for his alleged involvement in several kidnappings.

Gonzalez Abad was arrested on Jan. 13 in Zapopan, a city in Jalisco state, where he had fled following the arrests of several other members of the kidnapping gang that he allegedly led.

The gang abducted a woman in the city of Escobedo, but a special police unit rescued the victim and arrested two suspects, who provided information on other members of the criminal organization. Authorities are looking for three other Monterrey police officers, including two members of the mayor's security detail.

Arellanes, a member of the conservative National Action Party, or PAN, and Monterrey's first female mayor, is running for the governorship of Nuevo Leon state. Mexico is holding its midterm elections on June 7, with 500 seats in Congress, nine governorships and 1,532 local offices up for grabs.

Kidnapping has become a widespread problem in Mexico in recent years, with gangs of different levels of sophistication targeting victims from various strata of society.

Congress approved legislation in October 2010 that stiffened the penalties for kidnappers from 25 to 45 years behind bars when the victims are mutilated or if the criminals are retired or active-duty police officers, and from 40 to 70 years in prison if the victims are killed.

President Enrique Peña Nieto's administration has made fighting kidnapping a priority.

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