

## **Mexico: Fine words without echo -- How long before action follows promises on human rights?**

*President Fox's first year in office has produced many fine statements on human rights, but almost nothing else, Amnesty International said today on the eve of the anniversary of his inauguration.*

*Following recent statements by President Fox, in Peru, that Mexico is now an example of respect for human rights, Amnesty International said, "President Fox appears to think that human rights violations have miraculously ended with expressions of good will. However, all the evidence indicates that the new government has had little or no impact in protecting human rights or investigating violations. The cycle of impunity remains intact."*

*"Even the long overdue release of environmental activists and prisoners of conscience Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera last month stopped short of full justice, as there was no acknowledgement of their innocence, nor of the torture they suffered," the organization added.*

*"The murder of human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa only a few weeks ago -- the single most serious attack on a human rights defender in Mexico in recent years -- is a sharp reminder of what happens when the authorities fail to investigate promptly and thoroughly all reports of human rights violations: violations will continue unabated and those responsible will continue to walk free," Amnesty International said.*

*Among the cases for which Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Mexican government to take action, is that of prisoner of conscience General Francisco Gallardo, who has now spent over eight years in detention for criticising human rights abuses committed by the*

Mexican army. The Mexican authorities have consistently ignored recommendations by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and by the United Nations that he be released.

"The decision by the Inter-American Commission to take General Gallardo's case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to request provisional measures in his favour shows the continuing failure of the Mexican authorities act on its obligations," Amnesty International said. "This constitutes a challenge and an opportunity for the Mexican authorities to make a real break with the past, end the injustice General Gallardo has been suffering for years and release him immediately and unconditionally."

Amnesty International noted that the many outstanding human rights concerns in Mexico -- including the use of torture, widespread impunity for human rights violations and the role of military justice -- are not being tackled effectively, if at all. The organization also stressed that the current administration has full responsibility for dealing with the legacy of past human rights violations as well as for preventing them from occurring again. The limited number of initiatives put forward have yet to produce any practical results.

Once again, Amnesty International urged the Mexican authorities to ensure prompt, thorough and independent investigation into all unresolved human rights violations -- including Digna Ochoa's killing -- in order to identify and bring to justice those responsible and really start to break the cycle of impunity.

The organization also repeated its call for the necessary reforms of the judiciary and the Attorney Generals' Office, *Procuraduría General de la República* (PGR) to ensure their independence and adherence to fundamental human rights principles.

*"The untouchable status of military courts and the increasing role of the military in the PGR is further proof of the extension of military influence in civilian institutions," Amnesty International said.*

*The organization also remarked that the continuing failure to present to Congress the ratification of vital human rights treaties, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, is another stark reminder that President Fox's loud commitments on the international stage on human rights appear to have little or no echo in Mexico.*

*"The time for words is now over. After a year in power, President Fox must take concrete steps to convert his fine human rights rhetoric into real, tangible improvements throughout Mexico." Amnesty International said.*

*\ENDS*

public document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>