

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

10 September 2010
AI Index: AMR 41/067/2010

At last some progress in gaining access to justice for migrants in Mexico; now the Mexican Government must keep its promise to strengthen protection

Amnesty International views as very positive the fact that the Senate yesterday recognized the need to improve access to justice for irregular migrants in Mexico. Its approval of an amendment to article 67 of the General Population Law is an important step towards ensuring that all migrants have equal access to justice. The government of President Felipe Calderón must now publish the amendment in the Official Gazette as a matter of urgency so that it becomes law.

Article 67 had been criticized by several human rights organizations for discriminating against migrants. Under it, all federal, state and municipal authorities are obliged to demand that all foreign citizens requesting services from them show evidence of their legal status within the country. This has been a significant factor in deterring irregular migrants from reporting that they have been the victims of abuses or crimes and has also led some authorities to refuse to attend to migrants who have been abused. Under the amendment passed yesterday, it is illegal to refuse to attend to, or restrict the processing of, complaints concerning human rights or the securing of justice whatever the legal status of a migrant may be.

Amnesty International also welcomes the recent promise by the Interior Minister to improve coordination between the Mexican authorities at all three levels of government in order to combat abuses against migrants and provide them with greater protection.

The federal government must now turn that promise into concrete measures for preventing and addressing abuses suffered by irregular migrants in Mexico. Amnesty International urges the federal government to establish a clear action plan that ensures that all key agencies, such as the Federal Attorney General's Office, the Ministry for Public Security, the Interior Ministry, the National Migration Service and the authorities within each state, act in a coordinated and effective way. Data on abuses suffered by migrants and the government action taken to deal with them must also be gathered and published. It is essential to establish clear indicators so that the various bodies can be held accountable with regard to the action they take on behalf of migrants.

Amnesty International regrets that it took the killing of 72 migrants for this issue to be put on the federal government's agenda but believes that this is a key moment for President Calderón's government to show leadership and take concrete steps to ensure the protection of migrants in Mexico. The organization hopes that the words of the Interior Minister will be turned into action and that the amendment to article 67 will be published and implemented as soon as possible.

Background information

Tens of thousands of irregular migrants on their way to the US border face the constant threat of kidnapping and attack from criminal groups and, in some cases, the security forces. Those behind such abuses are almost never brought to justice and migrants have little chance of

securing justice. Hardly any information is available for the many relatives searching for their loved ones.

In April Amnesty International published a report highlighting the failure of the authorities at federal and state level in Mexico to take effective steps to prevent and punish the thousands of kidnappings, killings and rapes perpetrated against irregular migrants by criminal groups. Such groups often operate with the complicity or acquiescence of public officials.

For further information, see “Invisible victims, Migrants on the move in Mexico” at:
www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR41/.../amr410142010eng.pdf

For a short Amnesty International film on this issue, see:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMiVOsr5lyI

To take action, go to:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/protect-undocumented-migrants-mexico>