

URGENT ACTION

DISAPPEARANCES STRATEGY PUTS SEARCH AT RISK

On 14 December 2023, president of Mexico Andrés Manuel López Obrador and representatives of the Ministry of the Interior shared the results of the Disappeared Persons Search Strategy. This strategy includes an update of a census that records the number of people disappeared nationwide, known as National Register of Missing and Disappeared Persons (RNPDO). The authorities decreased considerably the number of disappeared and missing people, and categorized ambiguously 80,000 people, acknowledging that did not have enough data to search them. We urge the Mexican government to ensure transparency and participation of the relatives of the disappeared on the census preparation.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

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Dear Minister,

I'm writing to express my concern for the impact that the Disappeared Persons Search Strategy could have on the search of the people disappeared and missing, especially on the tireless work of the collectives of family members of disappeared and missing people to find their loved ones. According to collectives and human rights organizations that accompany them, the National Search Strategy was neither consulted nor coordinated with the search collectives in the country, which has raised serious doubts about the way in which disappeared and missing persons are being counted. In fact, almost 80,000 people considered in August 2023 as disappeared and missing are ambiguously categorized in the December 2023 update.

In addition, recent changes in the National Search Commission (CNB by its Spanish acronym), the governmental agency in charge of searching the missing and disappeared people, have hindered the work to find the hundreds of thousands of missing and disappeared people in the country. The Mexican government's new strategy seems to be focusing on demonstrating that the disappearance situation in Mexico is improving and that there is not such a serious crisis, rather than on finding the disappeared and missing persons.

According to the UN International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, among other international documents, families of disappeared people have the right to truth and effective investigations, as well as to seek, receive and impart information, among other rights. This comprises the participation of victims, organizations and experts in search policies, including mechanisms that provide and collect data on disappeared people.

Therefore, I urge you to take all necessary measures to ensure truth and justice for the victims of disappearance in Mexico, including by guaranteeing transparency and participation of the relatives of the disappeared and missing people on the census preparation.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The number of missing and forcibly disappeared people remained high in Mexico. In 2023, the National Search Commission (CNB) registered at least 12,031 new cases of missing and forcibly disappeared people, of whom 8,426 were men, 3,596 were women, and 9 were unidentified. According to official figures, a total of 114,004 people were registered as missing and forcibly disappeared between 1962 and the end of 2023. Relatives searching for disappeared and missing people faced serious risks, including enforced disappearance, killing, repression and threats.

In May 2023, the federal government launched a questionable strategy to address the crisis of disappearances in Mexico. On August 23, 2023, the head of the CNB, Karla Quintana, resigned after the president announced the creation of a new census on disappearances, arguing that CNB figures were unreliable and too high. Civil society organizations and activists feared that the Executive branch tried to lower the official numbers of disappeared people to hide the failure of federal public security policies. On October 23, Teresa Guadalupe Reyes Sahagún was appointed as the new head of the CNB; civil society organizations expressed concern around the lack of consultation, participation, transparency and scrutiny in the recruitment process, as well as her lack of experience.

On December 14, the Executive presented the results of the new census of disappearances, the National Search Strategy, decreasing the official number of disappeared and missing people between 1962 and August 2023. It also revealed that they did not have enough information to search 79,955 people and classified them in ambiguous categories. On December 18, collectives of family members of disappeared and missing people protested against the National Search Strategy, denouncing lack of transparency and possible manipulation of data. On December 27, federal government authorities defended the National Search Strategy. However, in fact, the concerns about the census continue, as well as the dismantling of institutions dedicated to search the hundreds of thousands of people in the country.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish. You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 28 June 2024. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Disappeared people (they/them); collectives of family members of disappeared people (they/them)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/A