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Reply to the Open Letter from the Government of the State of Chihuahua on Amnesty International's report

Amnesty International today learned, via the press, of the reply from the Office of the Secretary General of the Government of the State of Chihuahua to the organization's report on the disappearance and murder of women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, which was published last Monday.

Amnesty International appreciates the detailed comments contained in the letter published in the media and regrets that it was not given the opportunity to speak directly with the Governor, who would not grant an interview to the Amnesty International delegation that recently visited Chihuahua.

The state government criticizes the document, which it claims is biased, fails to cite specific sources and is based exclusively on information obtained by NGOs, without taking account of information provided by the authorities. According to the state government, the report "lies" by reaching generalized conclusions and failing to recognize action taken at State level.

Amnesty International is surprised that the state government should try to discredit the methodology and conclusions of the report, contrary to the views of the federal authorities, including those of President Fox, the Minister of the Interior and the Attorney General. Interviews with the federal authorities have focused on specific action to be taken to put an end to these crimes, rather than denying a pattern of violence against women that has persisted for a decade because of a failure on the part of the State at all levels to take appropriate action..

The report's conclusions are based on information obtained by Amnesty International during interviews with victims, family members, lawyers, human rights defenders and various government bodies and official institutions. A significant number of case files have also been examined, some of which were handed over to Amnesty International by the state authorities. Much of the information has been obtained during visits made by Amnesty International representatives to Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua. Having detected a lack of official information relating to the cases, the organization decided to make its own compilation, comparing information from the different sources referred to, both official and unofficial.

In its report, Amnesty International acknowledges progress made in identifying and trying the suspected perpetrators, but expresses its serious concern about the inadequacy of the proceedings against them. These call for serious investigation, as there are indications that some prisoners were subjected to torture and ill treatment to obtain self-incriminatory statements as the sole source of evidence. For this reason Amnesty International is unable to share the conclusion reached by the state government that most of the cases have been "solved" and insists on an independent review of those cases where violations of

due process against prisoners have been detected.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the state government continues to make light of the serious complaints of family members about the contempt and discrimination with which they have been treated. It is the state's as yet unfulfilled duty to respect the dignity of victims and their families, to cooperate with them and make reparations.

Amnesty International takes a positive view of the state government finally giving an undertaking to the families and to the population in general to clear up these crimes. The organization welcomes the declared willingness to review thoroughly and comply with the recommendations contained in the report. Amnesty International trusts that this undertaking will be translated into action so as to put an end to the impunity which for ten years has denied the victims, and Chihuahua society in general, truth and justice.

Public Document

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