

## **Mexico: time to turn promises on human rights into action**

*At a time when Mexico enters a new political phase, it is essential that full respect for human rights lies at the heart of the government's announced policies, Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané said today.*

*Mr Sané will be leading a delegation of Amnesty International representatives visiting Mexico City between 13 and 16 March. The delegation has requested to meet with President Vicente Fox Quesada and members of his cabinet to discuss the gravity of Mexico's human rights situation and the government's concrete proposals to address it.*

*"While the world is concentrating its attention on Chiapas, we are going to raise with the authorities a range of human rights concerns that go well beyond the borders of Chiapas, and propose recommendations to take forward President Fox's promise that human rights in Mexico will be protected 'like never before'," Mr Sané added.*

*"It is imperative that the government develop and implement a new national plan of action on human rights which addresses the future and outstanding human rights concerns in Mexico."*

*Since his election, President Fox has expressed on numerous occasions his intention to undertake reforms aimed at building a new Mexico based on the rule of law and full respect for human rights. He has also pledged to bring Mexican legislation in step with international human rights standards which the country has signed up to.*

*Amnesty International welcomes President Fox's statements, but these must be turned into practical steps to put an end to torture,*

political killings and the daily fear of indigenous communities living under the constant threat of "paramilitary" violence.

The organization is also concerned that human rights defenders are unable to carry out their work without fear of harassment.

"Moreover, hundreds of cases of past human rights violations, including 'disappearances' and killings, remain shrouded with impunity," Mr Sané said.

Among the cases still unresolved are the massacres of peasants in Aguas Blancas and El Charco, Guerrero state, in 1995 and 1998 respectively, and of indigenous people in the Chiapas communities of Acteal (1996) and El Bosque (1998). 33 years on, the massacre of students in Tlatelolco, Mexico City, in October 1968 remains unanswered for.

"The vicious circle of impunity must be broken if Mexico is to leave behind its long history of human rights abuses and move towards a future in which the rights and dignity of all are respected," Mr Sané said.

During his visit, Mr Sané will be visiting general José Francisco Gallardo, held at Neza-Bordo prison, state of Mexico, one of the three Mexican prisoners adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience. General Gallardo is serving a 28-year sentence for military offences after publishing a thesis calling for the creation of an Ombudsman's Office for the armed forces. The other two prisoners of conscience, peasant environmentalists Rodolfo Montiel Flores and Teodoro Cabrera García, are detained in Guerrero state.

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