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## **Mexico urged to investigate disappearances of men seized by navy**

The Mexican civilian authorities must urgently investigate the enforced disappearance of a man detained by members of the Mexican Navy in the state of Tamaulipas last week, Amnesty International has said.

Navy authorities have denied involvement in the detention of José Fortino Martínez on 5 June but eyewitnesses present during the navy operation said they followed official vehicles carrying Martínez to the gates of a nearby military base.

“The official denial of involvement in the detention of José Fortino Martínez is not credible in the face of compelling evidence,” said Javier Zuñiga, Special Advisor at Amnesty International.

At least three other men -- Jose Cruz Dias Jaramillo, Joel Diaz Espinoza and Martin Rico Garcia -- are also missing after apparently being detained by naval officers in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas state, which borders the US, between 2 and 5 June.

“These men are at huge risk of torture, ill-treatment and even death. The more time goes by, the greater the danger is,” said Javier Zuniga.

Amnesty International has called on the civilian Federal Attorney General’s Office and the National Human Rights Commission to conduct immediate, impartial and effective investigations to locate the missing men.

“These investigations must include direct access to all Navy installations and personnel involved and prevent more abuse from taking place,” said Javier Zuniga.

Relatives of the missing men have filed complains with federal authorities but all have denied involvement and enquires have produced no results.

When relatives protested outside the town hall on the night of José Fortino Martínez’s detention, members of the Mexican Navy reportedly threatened them with detention if they continued.

The increasing role of the Mexican Navy in policing operations carried out by the Armed Forces in different regions of the country against criminal gangs is leading to more human rights violations.

The military justice system which investigates such abuses is not impartial, independent or transparent, preventing victims and relatives from obtaining truth or justice.

“Amnesty International is fully aware of the increase in indiscriminate violence resulting from organized crime which has affected large sections of the population not involved in criminal activity, but enforced disappearance violate the rule of law and can amount to crimes against humanity,” said Javier Zuñiga.

### **Background Information**

Mexico is a state party to the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons, which provides that "persons alleged to be responsible for the acts constituting the offence of forced disappearance of persons may be tried only in the competent jurisdictions of ordinary law in each state, to the exclusion of all other special jurisdictions, particularly military jurisdictions".