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Mexico: Amnesty International issues alternative report to Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights

The Mexican government is providing the UN with an incomplete assessment of the human rights situation in the country, according to an Amnesty International's alternative report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council as it reviews the human rights performance of the Latin-American country on 10 February.

According to Amnesty International, the Mexican government has not acknowledged the frequent lack of implementation or impact of their policies and the worsening human rights climate in many parts of the country.

“The report submitted by the Mexican government about the state of human rights in the country does not reflect the reality on the ground,” said Kerrie Howard, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

“The government report's list of positive initiatives and reforms is good news. The problem is there is no information on progress in preventing continuing human rights violations and ending impunity,” said Kerrie Howard.

Amnesty International noted, for example, that:

- Mexico has so far failed to explicitly recognize the status of international human rights treaties in its Constitution.
- The authorities have yet to hold anyone to account for the 100 killings and 700 enforced disappearances that took place between the 1960s and 1980s.
- Mexican federal, state and municipal police officers implicated in serious human rights violations, such as arbitrary detention, torture, rape and unlawful killings, particularly those committed during civil disturbances in San Salvador Atenco and Oaxaca City in 2006, have not been brought to justice.
- The military justice system continues to try cases of human rights violations despite international human rights standards insisting these should be tried in civilian courts.
- The number of reports of abuses such as arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, sexual violence and unlawful killings by security officials has increased during security operations to combat violent criminal gangs.
- Human rights defenders, particular those in rural areas, often face persecution and sometimes prolonged detention on the basis of fabricated or politically-motivated criminal charges.
- Indigenous and other marginalized communities sometimes face harassment for opposing development projects affecting their livelihoods.
- Irregular migrants in transit in Mexico routinely face ill-treatment by state officials as well as sexual and other violence at the hands of criminal gangs.
- Despite advances in legislation to protect women from violence, implementation is weak. Reporting,

prosecution and conviction rates for those responsible for domestic violence, rape and even killings of women remain extremely low. Two years after the adoption of the 2007 General Law to prevent violence against women, two states have not even introduced legislation to enforce it.

- Poverty and marginalization continue to deprive many rural communities, particularly indigenous peoples, of the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to development, in accordance with their own needs and interests.

Amnesty International was also concerned at the lack of sustained and substantive dialogue with civil society on strengthening the impact of human rights policies.

Amnesty International recognized that Mexico's report highlights the open invitation to international human rights mechanisms and given that the country's key role in the design of the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council, the organization hopes the government will use this as an opportunity to reinvigorate its efforts to address human rights problems in Mexico.

The Universal Periodic Review process stipulates that governments may submit a report on the fulfilment of their human rights obligations to be reviewed by the Human Rights Council. Each government then participates in a dialogue with other states to present their report and answer questions from other states. Civil society organizations such as Amnesty International may submit their own contributions to the UPR process to inform the review. In the course of the dialogue, member states may recommend measures to enhance the fulfilment of the country's human rights obligations.

For Amnesty International's Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review regarding Mexico, please see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/038/2008/en>