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Human Rights Organizations Welcome the Start of the Interdisciplinary Group of Experts for the Ayotzinapa Case

Given the profound shortcomings of the Mexican authorities' investigation into the disappearance of the 43 students from the rural teacher's college of Ayotzinapa (Escuela Normal Rural Raúl Isidro Burgos) that took place in Iguala, Guerrero on September 26 and 27 of 2014, the organizations signed below welcome the work that will be undertaken by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts designated by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The Group's first visit to Mexico will begin on March 1 and it is anticipated that civil society organizations will be able to present their concerns, statements, and testimonies directly to the Group.

On November 12, 2014, the Mexican government, families of the disappeared students, and their representatives signed an agreement with the IACHR to establish the aforementioned Group, whose members—Alejandro Valencia Villa, Angela Buitrago (Colombia), Francisco Cox Vial (Chile), Claudia Paz y Paz (Guatemala), and Carlos Martín Beristáin (Spain)—were selected by the IACHR on January 16, 2015. According to the agreement, the Group's mandate involves: "the development of search plans to find disappeared persons while alive; technical analysis of the lines of investigation to determine criminal responsibilities; and technical analysis of the Comprehensive Plan for Attention to the Victims (Plan de Atención Integral a las Víctimas) of the events of September 26 and 27, 2014."

On February 11 and 13 of 2015 the experts held their first meeting at the headquarters of the IACHR in Washington D.C., with the goal of examining the Group's mandate, developing an initial work plan, and determining its first actions in Mexico. At the end of the meeting, the experts held a press conference¹ to highlight that, despite the enormous challenges, they hope to be able to contribute to efforts so that the families of the disappeared and the people of Mexico find truth, justice, and reparations.

The arrival of the Interdisciplinary Group to Mexico takes place just weeks after Mexico's Attorney General claimed to have legal certainty that the disappeared students had been murdered and their remains incinerated in Cocula, Guerrero. Such statements came as a surprise to the people of Mexico and the broader international community interested in ensuring that the investigations were serious, respectful of the suffering and expectations of justice of the students' families, and above all, free of political influence. In this context, we consider that the beginning of the Interdisciplinary Group's work will add value to the tireless efforts of the families and parents of the disappeared students, a group that not only has international support and solidarity, but also the valuable support of well-known organizations, including the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, among others.

The signatory organizations agree that the gravity of the crimes and gross human rights violations committed against the Ayotzinapa students demand thorough international scrutiny of the actions of federal, state, and local authorities in the country. To carry out this effort, we believe that the Interdisciplinary Group should be given the resources and personnel necessary to fulfill its mandate and issue its conclusions with

full autonomy and based on a technical framework. We urge the government of Mexico to publicly commit to comply with the recommendations and conclusions issued by the Interdisciplinary Group.

Signed:

Amnesty International

Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF)

Latin America Working Group (LAWG)

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

¹ See February 13, 2015 press release issued by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts: <http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=af0b024f4f6c25b6530ff4c66&id=863f7c04dc&e=9a75768765>.