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Mexico: Increased international scrutiny for violence against women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua.

On the eve of the hearing at the Inter American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) in Washington, Amnesty International is urging the Mexican authorities to make its commitments count three months after the announcement of the 40 point action plan to end the abduction and murder of women in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua.

The hearing, taking place on Monday 20th October, will be focused on the situation of women in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua. Representatives of both the federal and the state Mexican authorities will take part in the hearing as well as Amnesty International, represented by Yanette Bautista, alongside relatives of the victims and Mexican non-governmental organizations.

The central objective of the human rights organizations will be to urge the effective implementation of the IACHR's own recommendations made in March 2003 by the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights in her report on violence against women in Ciudad Juarez.

"There have been a number of positive steps since the publication in August of Amnesty International's report *"Intolerable Killings: Ten years of abductions and murders of women in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua"*. Amnesty International said "However, there's still a long way to go to ensure justice for the victims and their relatives and to enable the women of Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua to have confidence in the judicial system."

In late August President Fox announced the creation of a Commissioner to oversee the implementation of the government initiatives in Juarez. However, the mandate and powers of such a post remain unclear. It is also vital that whoever is finally named in the post has a strong independent track record in the area of women's rights and gender violence.

The recent visit by United Nations expert delegates to analyse flaws in investigative procedures in Ciudad Juarez also highlighted the grave failings in the administration of justice and may contribute to the development of new guidelines for such investigations.

"It is vital that these guidelines are drawn up in consultation with experts on gender violence, human rights organizations and relatives of victims." Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International looks forward to the publication of the government's awaited report evaluating the implementation of the action plan to assess evidence of progress in resolving the terrible crimes of Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua.

The organization believes that it is essential that federal authorities make themselves ultimately accountable for prevention and investigation of such crimes against women in Chihuahua state; that an independent mechanism is established to review the cases handled by the Chihuahua Public Prosecutors Office where there are allegations of abuses of due process, such as the use of torture; that the families of the victims are not only treated with respect and dignity in their struggle for justice, but that they are fully included in the implementation of all judicial and preventive measures.

Background

Amnesty International will be participating in the hearing alongside with the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (*Comision Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos*) and the Stop Impunity Campaign (*Campaña Alto a la Impunidad*).

Last weekend's visit by 4 members of the US House of Representatives and international human rights organizations, including a representative of Amnesty International, to Ciudad Juarez highlights the importance of the case and interest of the international community in seeing the end of pattern of abuses against women.

For a copy of the report "*Intolerable Killings: Ten years of abductions and murders of women in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua*", please see:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engamr410262003> (English)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/eslamr410262003> (Spanish)

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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