

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Amnesty International joins the campaign to classify the crime of forced disappearance in accordance with international standards in the State of Guerrero**

Forced disappearance is recognized by the international community as one of the most serious violations of human rights. It has been one of the most persistent violations in Mexico since Amnesty International first began documenting human rights violations there some decades ago, causing many families distress at not knowing the whereabouts or fate of their loved one. A recurrent element throughout has been the lack of effective legal mechanisms either to prevent such abuse on the part of the state or to succeed in punishing it.

Given the tragic experiences of many Latin American countries, the region succeeded in producing international principles and standards to eradicate this serious abuse of power on the part of the state. The Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons clearly stipulates the state's responsibility to prevent, investigate, punish and eradicate forced disappearances. As a state party, Mexico is committed to adopting the legislative measures necessary to classify forced disappearance as a criminal offence and to impose sanctions commensurate with the gravity of the practice. Despite this, internal legislation in Mexico remains inadequate to achieve this.

Most cases of forced disappearance are recorded as having taken place in Guerrero state: since the time of the "dirty war" to the present day. As has been documented by the *Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos de Guerrero* (Guerrero State Human Rights Commission), forced disappearance continues to be a criminal practice utilised by some state officials. The fact that there is no appropriate legal concept in the state with which to sanction this terrible crime means that offences go unpunished and family members remain in perpetual distress, benefiting from neither justice nor redress.

The political representatives of Guerrero must show their commitment to eradicating this crime within the state and to guaranteeing access to justice on the part of the victims' relatives. Amnesty International is therefore adding its voice to the vigorous call of the campaign to classify the crime of forced disappearance in accordance with international standards in Guerrero state.