

**PRESS STATEMENT**  
**Mexico City, 25th September 1997**

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Amnesty International is surprised and dismayed at the communique by the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry denying that it had confirmed that there would be a meeting between the General Secretary of the organization, Mr Pierre Sané and President Ernesto Zedillo during the former's recent official visit to the country.

On 13 November 1995, during a top level meeting to Mexico, Amnesty International's Deputy Secretary, Mr Derek Evans, was assured by the Foreign Affairs Secretary, Mr José Angel Gurria Trevino, of President Ernesto Zedillo's willingness to meet the organization's General Secretary during a future visit. These assurances were echoed by the Foreign Affairs Ministry to an Amnesty International delegation which visited the country in November 1996 and confirmed that the General Secretary would be visiting the country in 1997, at a date to be confirmed.

On 30 July 1997, Mr Sané confirmed to the Mexican Ambassador in London that he would be visiting Mexico and requested that the Foreign Affairs Ministry use its good offices to organise the agenda for his official visit. Shortly afterwards it was confirmed that it would take place between 22 and 24 September inclusive.

In addition to requesting an interview with President Ernesto Zedillo, based on the assurances already provided, the General Secretary requested interviews with the Foreign Affairs Secretary, José Angel Gurria Trevino, Home Office Secretary, Emilio Chuayffet Chemor and Defence Secretary, Enrique Cervantes Aguirre. He confirmed that other top level meetings planned would be organised directly with the institutions concerned, and would include the High Court of Justice and the Chamber of Deputies, which shortly afterwards confirmed the interviews requested. For this reason, it was surprising that the Foreign Affairs Ministry confirmed an interview with Mr Sané at 17.00 hours on 17 September, four days before Mr Sané's official visit to Mexico.

The statement that the Foreign Affairs Ministry informed Amnesty International in good time that President Ernesto Zedillo would not meet the General Secretary is false, since this news was received by the delegation in a telephone call at 18.30 hours on 23 September 1997, when Mr Sané would still have been able to attend the scheduled meeting.

At the same time, during the preceding days the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had confirmed the meetings requested with the Ministries, but these were cancelled at the last moment, without any satisfactory explanation, with the exception of the one with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, who was away from the country on the days of the visit by the General Secretary of Amnesty International.

Amnesty International regrets and is concerned by this lost opportunity for the General Secretary, on his first official visit to the country, to convey to the Mexican government serious concerns about the human rights situation in Mexico and corresponding recommendations as to ways of improving it, in accordance with the demands of the population and expectations of the international community. The government's reaction contrasts with the excellent reception given to Mr Sané by leading representatives of the legislative and judicial branches, as well as the Catholic Church and civilian society, which is mindful of the urgent need to respond to the human rights challenge in Mexico.

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