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## **Mexico: Authorities urged to end torture epidemic**

The Mexican authorities must take decisive action to tackle the systemic and widespread use of torture and ill treatment documented across the country, which dramatically increased under the government of Felipe Calderón, Amnesty International said in a new report today.

The report [\*Abusers known, victims ignored: Torture and ill treatment in Mexico\*](#) explores the increase of cases of torture and ill-treatment by police and security forces during the Calderón administration, the lack of effective investigations and the denial of justice for the victims.

“The Calderón administration has effectively turned a blind eye to the ‘torture epidemic’ we’ve been witnessing in Mexico,” said Rupert Knox, Mexico researcher at Amnesty International.

“The protection of human rights has been ignored or sidelined in favour of the government’s strategy of militarized combat of organized crime and drug cartels.”

“Across Mexico criminal suspects often face detention and trial on the basis of evidence obtained under torture and ill-treatment while prosecutors and courts fail to question seriously information or evidence obtained in this manner.”

In 2011, Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) received 1,669 reports of torture and ill treatment by police and security forces; up from 1,161 in 2010; 1,055 in 2009 and 564 in 2008. These figures cover reports of abuses by federal officials.

In the last three years, Amnesty International has recorded reports of torture in all 31 states and the Federal District.

Torture and ill-treatment takes place during detention - suspects can be held by prosecutors for up to 80 days before being charged or released.

Across Mexico military personnel performing policing functions have held thousands of suspects in military barracks before presenting them to prosecutors. In this context, there have been numerous reports of torture and ill-treatment while in military custody.

Despite laws aimed at deterring and punishing torture, most cases are never fully investigated and those responsible almost never brought to justice and therefore victims have no chance of redress or compensation.

Legislation criminalizing torture in Mexico’s 31 states and the Federal District exists but in most instances it is considerably weaker than federal law and falls far short of international standards.

According to Mexico’s National Statistics Institute between 2006 and 2010, there was one prosecution and no convictions for torture at the federal level. In the same period in the 31 states and the federal

district, there were 37 prosecutions and 18 torture convictions.

To date, cases of abuses by military personnel were dealt within the military justice system, as opposed to the civilian system. As a result, despite many reports of torture and ill-treatment by military personnel none have been brought to justice.

Mexico's National Supreme Court recently ruled that cases of human rights abuses against civilians or even military personnel should always be dealt with by the civilian justice system. The impact of these rulings remains to be seen.

Central American migrants crossing Mexico are also targets of torture and ill-treatment by criminal gangs often operating in collusion with public officials.

According to the CNDH, 11,000 migrants were kidnapped in a six-month period in 2010 alone, many suffering grave ill-treatment in which public officials may have been involved.

Amnesty International is not aware of a single case where police or other security agents have been prosecuted for the torture or ill-treatment of migrants.

“Federal authorities have shown an absolute lack of leadership to combat torture and ill-treatment seriously at the state level or federal level,” said Knox. “The only way to tackle torture and ill-treatment is by ensuring that all cases are properly investigated and those responsible, brought to justice.

“In a letter sent to Amnesty International, Mexican President elect Enrique Peña Nieto committed to implement policies and take action to end torture, we urge the authorities to abide by their promises.”

**[Mexico: Authorities urged to tackle “torture epidemic” – Facts and Figures](#)**