

Mexico: Challenging a history of human rights violations

Date: 31 July 2007

AI Index: AMR 41/042//2007

In December 2006, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa took office as President of Mexico. This new government has a golden opportunity to make the protection of human rights a reality for all people in Mexico.

It's a big challenge. Mexico has longstanding human rights problems. Many of the human rights violations in Mexico are a symptom of the failures of the judicial system and the lack of political will to recognize deep-rooted systematic flaws and weaknesses which perpetuate those violations.

Current human rights concerns in Mexico include arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment, violations in due process and denial of fair trials, the investigation and trial of military officials accused of human rights violations in military courts and the role of the military in law enforcement functions, violence against women, harassment and killing of journalists, intimidation of human rights activists and discrimination and marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Impunity for human rights violations remains constant, stretching back to crimes from the "dirty war" of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, whose victims are still denied justice.

Starting on 31 July, Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan will lead a High Level Mission to Mexico. The delegation will visit Mexico City and the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero. It will meet with government officials, survivors of human rights violations and members of civil society.

The delegation's first visit will be to the state of Oaxaca, where the delegation will gather testimonies from victims of some of the numerous violations committed by authorities during the political crisis that erupted in June 2006. These human rights violations have not been investigated, nor those responsible held to account. In its report, **Oaxaca - clamour for justice** (published 1 August, 2007), Amnesty International urges the authorities to identify and bring to justice all those responsible.

In an event in Mexico City, Amnesty International will hear from survivors of human rights violations from across Mexico regarding their struggle for justice and the need for urgent action to address human rights issues in Mexico. In **Mexico: Summary of Human Rights Concerns** (published 1 August, 2007), Amnesty International will set out a number of key challenges facing the government and legislature.

At the end of the visit Amnesty International's delegation will visit Guerrero, where the proposed construction of La Parota dam threatens to displace thousands of people from Indigenous and peasant communities. Amnesty International's report **Human rights at risk in La Parota dam project** (published 4 August, 2007) highlights how the failure to provide communities with adequate information on the project and to genuinely consult all those affected has undermined respect for human rights.

The message to President Calderón will be clear: the opportunity to respect, protect and fulfil human rights in Mexico must be grasped now.