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Mexico - Past violations: there will be no end to impunity until the victims and their relatives know the truth and justice is done

Though yet to study in detail the recently-leaked report by the *Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado (FEMOSPP)*, Office of the Special Prosecutor for Past Social and Political Movements, Amnesty International believes that its contents confirm the information documented by the organization. The report highlights the systematic violations of human rights that occurred during the 1970s, 80s and 90s in Mexico, including “disappearances”, torture and extrajudicial executions. The document also describes how the Mexican State carried out these serious abuses and shows which sectors of the population were most affected.

It should be stressed that the Mexican State failed to respond to the very serious human rights violations documented in the draft report in order to ensure that the victims and their relatives received justice, a situation that still pertains today.

The fact that the authors had partial access to the archives of institutions involved in the violence gives the draft report a firm foundation. However, it is regrettable that so far the archives of the *Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (Sedena)*, National Defence Ministry, which contain valuable information for establishing the truth, have not been fully opened. It is important that such information be made available to the victims and their relatives, as well as the whole of Mexican society.

Furthermore, It would be a serious matter if the contents of the draft report were changed in order to make them more acceptable to the Mexican authorities or to benefit any other interested party. This report must be a tool for bringing justice and not one that stands in its way.

It is regrettable that the current administration decided not to set up a Truth Commission to carry out a reliable study into the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that occurred in that period which could also have been used as a credible and independent tool to determine the truth of what happened and to bring about justice. Instead, it set up the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Past Social and Political Movements which lacked the necessary mechanisms and credibility to overcome the impunity that has protected those responsible for the violations for so long. The circumstances in which the report was leaked is yet another indication of the shortcomings of the Special Prosecutor’s Office, which appears to lack the confidence of either its own staff or the victims’ relatives.

For Amnesty International the fundamental problem is still the apparent lack of will on the part of the Mexican State to assume its responsibility to implement whatever measures are necessary to clarify and prosecute the serious and systematic violations committed by the State. Neither the judiciary, the legislature or the executive, including the army and the Attorney-General’s Office, have so far assumed their responsibility to provide answers to the victims and Mexican society as a whole.

The report says that the State has a responsibility to take urgent action to ensure access to the truth and justice for the victims and their relatives once and for all.

Additional information

From the 1960s until the 1980s, members of armed opposition groups and others labelled by the authorities as political opponents, such as political activists, students and social leaders, were specifically targeted, mainly by members of the army, for widespread systematic human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, “disappearance” and extrajudicial execution. During that period, over 500 people “disappeared”, mainly in Guerrero State. Those responsible for these crimes against humanity have never been brought to justice. The whereabouts of many of the victims is still not known. Armed opposition groups were also responsible for abuses during that period.

In 2001 President Vicente Fox ordered a Special Prosecutor’s Office to be set up to investigate these crimes, establish the truth and bring those responsible to justice. However, since then little progress has been made in obtaining justice. The report was drafted by the historical research team at the Special Prosecutor’s Office and was recently published on the website of the National Security Archive in the United States.