

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND SEARCH AND JUSTICE FOR 43 STUDENTS

The Mexican authorities have yet to establish the whereabouts of 43 students who have been victims of enforced disappearance since 26 September. Relatives and peers of the disappeared students continue to demand an urgent search, justice and reparation.

Local police operating in collusion with criminal gangs are thought to be responsible for these enforced disappearances, as well as the killings of three students and three by-standers on 26 September in the town of Iguala, Guerrero state. Many others were wounded.

More than 70 municipal officials and others have been arrested and charged in connection with these human rights violations. Many others remain on the run. The Federal Attorney General's Office (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR) has not reported any progress in the investigation against state and federal authorities. They had received evidence of collusion between municipal officials and criminal groups months before these events occurred, but failed to take any action. Many human remains have been uncovered in the Iguala area in the course of this investigation. So far, independent forensic tests have concluded that none of the uncovered human remains belong to any of the disappeared students. The forensic investigation is ongoing.

The relatives of the disappeared students, the Mexican government and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have agreed on the creation of an interdisciplinary group of independent experts who will assess the state response to this case (specifically, the search, criminal investigation and reparation for victims). The group will make recommendations to improve the state response and even file criminal complaints if and when necessary.

Please write immediately in Spanish, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to take all effective measures available in order to establish the whereabouts of the 43 students and ensure their physical and mental safety;
- Urging the Federal Attorney General to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into all the human rights violations committed in this case and bring those responsible to justice, including all state and federal officials who repeatedly failed to investigate previous reports of collusion between local public officials and criminal gangs in Iguala;
- Urging the authorities to fully and promptly implement the signed agreement with the victims' relatives and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 JANUARY 2015 TO:

President of Mexico

Enrique Peña Nieto
Residencia Oficial de los Pinos
Col. Chapultepec, Mexico D.F., C.P.
11850, Mexico
Fax: +52 55 5093 4901
Email via website:
<http://en.presidencia.gob.mx/contacto/>
Twitter: @EPN

Federal Attorney General

Jesús Murillo Karam
Procuraduría General de la República
Reforma 211-213, Col. Cuauhtémoc,
C.P. 06500, Mexico City, Mexico
Fax: +52 55 5346 0908
Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx or
<http://pgr.gob.mx/servicios/mail/plantilla.asp?mail=1>
Twitter: @PGR_mx

And copies to:

Local human rights organization
Centro de Derechos Humanos de la
Montaña "Tlachinollan"
Email: accion.urgente@tlachinollan.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email **Email address** Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 246/14. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/039/2014/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Some 500 students attend the Raúl Isidro Burgos Rural Teacher Training College (Escuela Normal Rural Raúl Isidro Burgos) in the town of Ayotzinapa, Guerrero state, some 300km south of Mexico City. They receive training to become primary school teachers in rural communities. Some of the local inhabitants are of Indigenous origin. In general, these communities – and the students themselves – are poor and suffer from high levels of discrimination, marginalization and lack of access to basic services.

The students at the rural training college are also politically active and they have staged many demonstrations in relation to rural teachers, education policy and other political issues. Acts of violence have been reported in some of these demonstrations, and public authorities have repeatedly blamed the student teachers. The training colleges have frequently been starved of resources in recent years as rural education has not been a priority.

In December 2011 Ayotzinapa students who were protesting on the main highway outside Chilpancingo, the state capital, were attacked by state and federal police resulting in three deaths, two of them students. At least 24 people suffered torture and other ill-treatment. Those police and superiors responsible for the abuses against students have never been held to account, encouraging a climate of impunity. Amnesty International has highlighted this case many times, most recently in its report *Out of control: Torture and other ill-treatment in Mexico* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/020/2014/en>).

Abduction and disappearances remain routine in Mexico with public officials often acting in collusion with criminal gangs. The 43 students who have been forcibly disappeared since 26 September are part of the more than 22,000 cases of people who are missing or disappeared in Mexico and whose whereabouts remain unknown. The government released this revised figure in August 2014 but it has repeatedly failed to explain how it has reached this conclusion or to publish any further details about those cases. It is unknown how many of those people have been victims of abduction by criminal gangs or enforced disappearances in which public officials are directly or indirectly involved. In 2013 the Federal Attorney General's Office set up a specialized unit to investigate cases of abductions and disappearances and establish the whereabouts of victims. To date, they have not released any detailed information regarding its effectiveness. For further information see *Confronting a nightmare: Disappearances in Mexico* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/025/2013/en>).

Thousands of people have repeatedly taken to the streets in Mexico since October to demand an urgent search and justice for the Ayotzinapa students. Most demonstrations have been peaceful, but there has been some rioting in some cases, as well as excessive use of force and arbitrary arrests on the part of the police. At least 11 demonstrators were arrested on 20 November in Mexico City. They have been charged with serious criminal offences and sent to remote high-security. Federal and local governments must respect the rights to freedom of expression and association of all participants in peaceful demonstrations.

The Federal Attorney General has recently said that the main line of investigation into these enforced disappearances indicates that the students were killed by local gang members after police officers handed the students over to them. The only basis for this preliminary conclusion seems to be the testimony of three gang members who are involved in the case.