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Mexico: Visit by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights -- an opportunity for strengthening rights protection

Mexico's human rights situation could turn into a crisis of major proportions if the government does not take additional and urgent practical steps to ensure the protection of human rights at all levels of society, Amnesty International said today on the eve of a visit to the country by Mary Robinson, United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"The visit by Mary Robinson is illustrative of the Mexican government's willingness to find a solution to Mexico's human rights situation," Amnesty International said. "However, the government will need to go beyond simply building institutional structures to promote and protect human rights and ensure that they become a reality for all."

Serious human rights abuses continue unchecked in Mexico. Ordinary citizens, public figures, and those linked to groups or organizations within civil society, receive death threats, and are arbitrarily detained, tortured or killed.

The human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa and her colleagues working at the *Prodh*, a human rights non-governmental organization, have recently received a series of death threats.

Reports of intimidation of communities in Chiapas state at the hands of so-called "paramilitary" groups, an increase in the deployment of army troops in the same region, and the deteriorating human rights situation in the state of Guerrero, have all further exacerbated the situation.

"One crucial step towards reducing tensions and bringing human rights abuses to an end is to ensure that recent recommendations by human rights experts attached to the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, are implemented by the government," the organization stressed.

Amnesty International also urges the government to ensure that those implicated in abuses, no matter their position or status within the wider society, are brought before a system of justice which should be, both in principle and practice, impartial, independent and effective.

"The Government of Mexico must develop a system of justice which reflects these criteria in its daily practices ," the organization concluded.

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