

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Mexico: urgent action needed to save lives of irregular migrants**

Routine abductions, sexual violence, forced recruitment into criminal gangs, people trafficking and murder of migrants are normal events in the lives of the tens of thousands of irregular migrants that cross Mexico every year and, according to Amnesty International, impunity for these grave abuses is the norm.

The government of Enrique Peña Nieto, which last Sunday completed a hundred days in office, has not so far taken any steps to correct the abject failure of the previous administration to deal with this humanitarian crisis.

“Once again, the fate of irregular migrants in Mexico appears to be reduced to a side issue,” said Rupert Knox, Amnesty International’s researcher on Mexico.

“Yet migrants’ shelters and human rights defenders have told Amnesty International of an increasing flow of migrants and an escalation in attacks on them and those working for their rights.”

In February there were new reports of abductions of migrants in Medias Aguas in Veracruz state, appearing to confirm this worsening situation. The authorities have yet to provide any information on the steps taken to investigate these incidents.

Human rights defenders who provide shelter and support for migrants have also faced more threats and intimidation.

On 4 March 2013, Ruben Figueroa, who was working at “La 72” shelter in Tenosique was threatened. “This fact highlights once again the risks faced by those committed to the safety of migrants,” said Knox.

On top of that, migrants rights defenders that receive official protection have consistently reported how poor or ineffective these measures are. The investigations into those behind the threats never prosper and local politicians routinely fail to support the work of shelters, and in some cases, foster hostility.

Recently, the Under Secretary for Population, Migration and Religious Issues at the Interior Ministry said that complaints of kidnapping of migrants are simply passed to the Federal Attorney General’s Office, which is symptomatic of the federal government’s inability to lead a coordinated and effective response to this crisis.

Regardless of further actions, the Peña Nieto’s Government must urgently:

- Ensure migrants’ rights defenders at risk receive effective protection.
- Implement federally-led measures to prevent and punish abuses against migrants.
- Establish and implement protocols for investigation of crimes against migrants and facilitate complaint mechanisms for migrants to report abuses.
- Establish a database for disappeared migrants so relatives can lodge information, including DNA, to assist in the identification of missing persons.

### **Additional Information**

Amnesty International asked irregular migrants what item would help them in their journey as a result of which the organization has provided different migrant shelters all over Mexico with some 15.000 pairs of socks.

While offering practical help the ultimate aim is to highlight how migrants crossing Mexico are vulnerable to exploitation and serious crime.

Hundreds of people have shown its solidarity with irregular migrants in Mexico through this campaign. You can get more information at [www.sendsocks.org](http://www.sendsocks.org).