

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Justice unfinished - remembering the Acteal massacre

On 22 December 1997, 45 indigenous people, mainly women and children, from the civil society organization, Las Abejas, were murdered in Acteal, Chenalhó municipality, Chiapas State. The authorities had armed and trained members of the illegal paramilitary or armed groups responsible and failed to prevent the massacre despite ample opportunity. While many of the gunmen have been convicted along with some junior officials, no senior level state or federal authority has ever been brought to justice for their suspected involvement in the case.

On the 10th anniversary of the massacre, Amnesty International reminds the authorities of their duty to provide the victims and their relatives who continue to live with the pain and the consequences of the atrocity with an effective remedy. The massacre remains one of the darkest moments in Mexico's modern history: the facts have never been fully established nor have all those responsible been brought to justice, nor have the victims received adequate reparations.

Amnesty International wishes to express its solidarity with the members of Las Abejas community who have campaigned tirelessly for justice and who are marking the 10th anniversary with a number of commemorative activities. Amnesty International urges the state and federal government to comply with their international responsibility to ensure truth, justice and reparations for the victims of this grave human rights violation.

Background

The investigation into the Acteal massacre has resulted in more than 70 individuals directly implicated in the attack being sentenced to between 25 and 36 years for murder, wounding and firearms offences. Many of these sentences are being appealed. 14 public officials were also convicted and served between three and eight years for murder and wounding by omission or firearms offences. Nevertheless, senior officials, including members of the military, suspected of involvement in the massacre, either by failure to prevent the atrocity or by acquiescing with the perpetrators, have not had to account for their actions and have so far evaded justice.

The civil society of Las Abejas was formed in 1992 as a pacifist catholic organization struggling for indigenous rights and the peaceful resolution of local conflicts.