

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Mexico: Progress in human rights protection with the classification of the crime of forced disappearance in Guerrero, promoted by civil society**

Amnesty International has learned with satisfaction of the recent approval of the Law to Prevent and Punish the Forced Disappearance of Persons in Guerrero State (*Ley para Prevenir y Sancionar la Desaparición Forzada de Personas en el Estado de Guerrero*) on the part of the State Congress. The organization considers that this new law represents a step in the right direction in the prevention and punishment of this crime in Guerrero and sets an important precedent throughout the whole of Mexico.

Local and national non-governmental organizations, along with the Commission for the Defence of Human Rights in Guerrero (*Comisión para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Guerrero* -Coddhum), have been campaigning since 2003 to get specific legislation on forced disappearances passed in Guerrero State, in accordance with international standards. This initiative has been supported by Amnesty International and other international human rights organizations.

It is through civil society's lobbying of the legislative and executive authorities over the past two years that it has finally been possible to make this law a reality in Guerrero. It is important that the Guerrero State authorities recognise the key role played by civil society in promoting this important initiative.

With this law, Guerrero now has a legal mechanism that recognises forced disappearance as a serious, autonomous and independent crime. In addition, according to the new legislation, forced disappearance will be considered as an ongoing or permanent crime until the fate or whereabouts of the victim has been established, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the human rights instruments, including the *Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons*.

Amnesty International trusts that the recent commitment made by the Congress to prevent and punish forced disappearance in Guerrero State will result in real action. It is time that the law was duly implemented so that this terrible crime no longer goes unpunished and so that the families of all disappeared persons have the right to justice and reparation, in accordance with the provisions of the international instruments.

Forced disappearance is considered by the international community to be one of the most serious of human rights violations. Over the last 30 years, Guerrero has been the setting for more forced disappearances at the hands of the state authorities than any other state in Mexico, particularly during the "dirty war" of the 1970s and early 1980s when the authorities crushed political activists and social leaders along with members of the armed opposition groups. Amnesty International has also documented cases of forced disappearances in recent years at the hands of Guerrero State officials, who continue to enjoy

impunity.