

URGENT ACTION

PROSECUTORS MUST INVESTIGATE TORTURE

On 3 August, José Eduardo Ravelo died from multiple internal injuries, after telling his mother the police had tortured him in detention days before in Mérida, state of Yucatán. The prosecutor's office carrying out the investigation of Jose Eduardo's death has publicly stated that torture or ill treatment did not occur during his detention, even before concluding the investigation, raising serious doubts about the seriousness and impartiality of the prosecutors. We urge the Attorney General to ensure an independent and exhaustive investigation into all possible crimes committed against José Eduardo, and to guarantee full access to justice and reparations for his mother.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Alejandro Gertz Manero
Attorney General
Attorney General's office
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Dear Attorney General,

I am extremely concerned by the public declarations recently made by the prosecutor's office in charge of the ongoing investigation into the alleged torture of José Eduardo Ravelo at the hands of police officers in Mérida, state of Yucatán in July, and his subsequent death on 3 August.

José Eduardo, 23, had travelled from Veracruz to Mérida for a job interview. According to his mother on 23 July José Eduardo told her the police had detained him two days before, and that agents the beat and sexually abused him. He died days later from multiple internal injuries.

According to the information received, the prosecutor's office has refused to apply crucial guidelines to effectively document and investigate signs of torture (Istanbul Protocol). Despite this and that the investigation is still ongoing, on 28 October the prosecutor's office publicly stated that based on the evidence gathered, José Eduardo was neither tortured nor sexually assaulted by police officers and that none of his rights had been violated. These hasty conclusions and omissions to apply the Istanbul protocol put at risk the rights of José Eduardo's family to have his death and possible torture or ill treatment in police custody clarified with all due diligence.

I urge you to immediately ensure an independent, effective and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture, sexual assault and excessive use of force perpetrated against José Eduardo is carried on, in compliance with all existing guidelines including the Istanbul Protocol. His mother's rights to justice and reparations must be fully guaranteed.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A few days after Jose Eduardo's mother made public the story of his son in August, state representatives stated publicly that the young man had been detained for "disturbing the public order" because he was allegedly "under the influence of drugs".

In August, a judge dismissed charges against four municipal police officers who had been initially charged with homicide, aggravated rape and aggravated torture crimes against Jose Eduardo, stating that was no sufficient evidence to prosecute them.

The prosecutor's office of the State of Yucatan was initially in charge of investigations, but a prosecutor's unit specialized in investigations of torture, from the Attorney General's Office at federal level (Fiscalía General de la República, FGR) then took over the case. According to the information received by Amnesty International, prosecutors now in charge have refused to use Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ("Istanbul Protocol") which contains essential guidelines to effectively document torture, arguing they cannot do it with deceased persons.

In its public statement from 28 October, the FGR also mentioned they had detected problems in investigations carried out by prosecutor's of the State of Yucatan who had previously been in charge of the investigation.

To date, there is still no clarity about the causes and responsible of his death and alleged torture, which remain unpunished.

The ombudsperson's office (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos) also opened an investigation into all alleged human rights violations perpetrated by Mexican institutions against José Eduardo and his mother, which remains pending to date.

Amnesty International has long documented human rights violations perpetrated during arrests or detentions by national and state security forces in Mexico, including arbitrary detentions, excessive use of force and torture. In 2017, Amnesty International published the report [False suspicions: Arbitrary detentions by police in Mexico](#). The research showed the way in which arrests by police forces in Mexico occur, specifically, when the authorities alleged that they arrest a person in flagrante delicto; that is, at the time when a crime was being committed. Amnesty International found that, in Mexico, the arrests of people who were allegedly committing a crime at the time of the arrest, do not serve as a genuine response to the crimes being committed in the country, but are used by the authorities illegally, mainly against those who face historical situations of discrimination, with a worrying impact on young men living in poverty. The report also showed that the use of undue force during detention persists, and that many detainees are subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

On May 5, 2020, Giovanni Lopez, a 30-year-old bricklayer, died after being beaten by police after being arrested in the state of Jalisco, apparently for not wearing a face mask. In March 2021, several UN bodies and human rights organizations condemned the death of Victoria Salazar, a Salvadoran refugee, resulting from her arrest by while in the custody of at hands of four police officers in Tulum, state of Quintana Roo, as a result of excessive force.

United Nations human rights bodies have also regularly expressed their concerns about the widespread use of torture, ill-treatment and excessive use of force by police forces, armed forces and other public officials, particularly during arrest and the early stages of detention, and the serious deficiencies in the investigation of acts of torture and ill-treatment in Mexico, as well as the persistence of high levels of impunity associated with this type of crime and made recommendations to the Mexican authorities to end these human rights violations.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: SPANISH

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [31 January 2022]

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: [José Eduardo Ravelo] (he, him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/A.