



Index: AMR 41/1714/2020
24 January 2020

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS PREVENTED FROM ACCESSING MIGRANT HOLDING CENTRES

Dear Commissioner

I am writing to you on behalf of Amnesty International to express our concern about the restrictions imposed by the National Institute for Migration (Instituto Nacional de Migración, INM) on various organizations working to defend the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers regarding access to migrant holding centres in the south of country and in Mexico City between 20 and 21 January 2020.

Despite having the necessary permits, which were valid, to carry out their work monitoring the situation of the detainees, members Asylum Access, Formación y Capacitación (FOCA), the Colectivo Kalsilaltik and Voces Mesoamericanas have reported to Amnesty International that their access to the holding centres in Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Cupape I and II), Comitán de Domínguez, San Cristóbal de las Cases, Villahermosa (annex) and Mexico City was denied or limited. The reasons given included unforeseen circumstances (related to the detention of members of the migrant caravan), the presence of officials providing information to detainees about the Sembrando Vidas (Sowing Lives) programme, an internal circular purportedly prohibiting one person's access and the need to request additional permits, among others. On only two occasions, following lengthy discussions with the authorities in charge, were teams eventually given access for a limited time, which was not sufficient to enable them carry out their monitoring work and interview people properly.

In addition, on 13 January, the Fray Matías de Córdoba Human Rights Centre was informed that the INM had rejected a request for renewal of the permit giving its members access to the Siglo XXI migrant holding centre in Tapachula. This NGO documented and reported human rights violations against those detained in that centre throughout 2019.

Amnesty International is particularly concerned about attempts by the INM to limit the work carried out by these organizations, occurring as they did a few days after the arrival of a migrant caravan at Mexico's southern border and the detention by the Mexican authorities of more than 3,000 of those taking part in it.¹

In such circumstances, where people in need of protection are at particular risk of human rights violations and deportation in breach of international law (the principle of *non-refoulement*), it is essential that the INM allow access to civil society organizations. Several United Nations mechanisms and procedures, including the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture in its report on its visit to Mexico, and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants have recognized the need to ensure that all civil society organizations have access to all detention centres where migrants are held.²

¹ INM, Press release 016/2020 of 23 January 2020, Press release 014/2020 of 22 January 2020, Press release 010/2020 of 20 January 2020 and Bulletin 25/2020 of 19 January 2020.

² Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture, Report on its visit to Mexico from 12 to 16 March 2016 (CAT/OP/MEX/R.2), 15 December 2017, p. 19 (In Spanish), and Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, 2012, para. 72.d.



In light of the above, we respectfully urge you to promptly ensure that the INM ensures civil society organizations can enter migrant holding centres and other detention centres where migrants and asylum-seekers are held in the country in order to carry out their work monitoring and defending the rights of migrants.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to your earliest response.

Yours sincerely,

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