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## **Mexico: "Disappearances" - a black hole in the protection of human rights**

Immediate steps must be taken to halt the increasing trend of "disappearances" in Mexico, Amnesty International said in a new report published today.

The report, *Mexico: "Disappearances" - a black hole in the protection of human rights*, reveals that the organization has documented an increase in the number of cases reported over the last four years.

"In most cases, there is strong, or even incontrovertible, evidence of official participation in carrying out 'disappearances', yet those responsible continue to shamelessly benefit from impunity," Amnesty International said.

"Should the impunity surrounding 'disappearances' be reversed, the authorities would be taking an important step in avoiding a possible repetition of the state-sponsored 'disappearances' which plagued Mexico during the 70s and 80s," the organization stressed.

Most of the latest "disappearances" reported to Amnesty International took place in the context of counter-insurgency and anti-narcotics operations. Victims include members of peasant organizations, indigenous people, students and teachers.

The "disappearances" have often taken place after victims have been detained in front of witnesses by members of the armed and police forces -- which is then repeatedly denied by the security forces and the Mexican Government.

Following national and international campaigns on their behalf, some of the victims have reappeared weeks or months later bearing signs of torture. In a small number of cases, the bodies of the "disappeared" were subsequently found with evidence that they had been extrajudicially executed.

"Neither the victims nor their relatives appear to have any effective recourse before the law in Mexico for seeking redress for these crimes," Amnesty International stressed, "particularly when the armed forces are involved."

The military jurisdiction -- under which these cases invariable fall when there is suspected army involvement -- provides a blanket of impunity for those implicated.

Furthermore, the Attorney General Offices and the Mexican courts have consistently failed to press charges against those alleged to be responsible for "disappearances", thus denying victims and relatives their only chance of getting justice and finding out the truth.

During the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, Mexico was one of the state parties to adopt the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action --

which reminds states of their duty to investigate any solid allegation of “disappearance” taking place in their territory and to prosecute the suspects.

The Amnesty International report concludes by urging the Mexican government to stop “disappearances”, clarify the fate of all those “disappeared” in the past, bring the perpetrators to justice, and provide appropriate reparation and compensation to the victims’ relatives.

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**For further information, to request a copy of the report, or to arrange an interview, please contact Amnesty International’s Press Office on +44 171 413 5562**

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