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Mexico: Digna Ochoa's memory merits a full investigation into her death

A year on from the killing of human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa, Amnesty International expressed its regret at the lack of real progress on the official investigation.

"The authorities need to overcome the flaws and irregularities that characterised the initial stages of the investigation," Amnesty International said.

Digna Ochoa, a human rights lawyer, was shot dead in her office in Mexico City in on 19 October 2001.

"The authorities must fulfil their commitment to effectively and impartially investigate her killing and ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their legitimate work without fear of reprisals," Amnesty International stated.

"If justice is not done in this case -- which has enjoyed so much international and national attention -- what hope is there for numerous other cases of human rights violations against human rights defenders and others?"

Amnesty International believes that the anniversary of Digna Ochoa's killing is a poignant moment to recall her outstanding contribution to the protection of human rights in Mexico through her tireless work to force the authorities to investigate human rights violations and bring those responsible to justice. It is also a crucial moment to remind the authorities of their commitment to effectively and impartially investigate her killing.

A new prosecutor (Fiscal), Margarita Guerra, was appointed to head the investigation on 1 August 2002. She has declared her willingness to implement recommendations from the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and allow their international forensic experts to participate in the investigation. However, although the participation of these experts has reportedly been agreed by the relevant authorities, the measure has yet to be implemented.

"Delays in the participation of these forensic experts will further undermine the credibility of the enquiry and its findings," Amnesty International said.

"It is vital that the Mexican government and other governments make resources available to enable experts to fully conduct their work as soon as possible".

Background

Amnesty International remains concerned that impunity for human rights violations continue to be rampant in Mexico despite commitments from President Fox's administration to bring in a new era of human rights protection.

For more information please see: Mexico: Credibility of investigation into the death of Digna Ochoa undermined by new press leak (AMR 41/013/2002), <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/index/amr410132002>

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