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## **Mexico: Common graves in Ciudad Juárez -- Amnesty International calls for transparency and meticulous investigations**

No stone must be left unturned in investigating the full circumstances surrounding the discovery of bodies in common graves in Ciudad Juárez, Amnesty International said today, calling for full transparency and thorough forensic investigations.

"Those responsible must be brought to justice, and for that it is imperative that all investigations are carried out with the clear aim of finding the truth, that all findings be made public and that a thoroughly professional approach is used when exhuming the bodies," stressed Peter Archard, Amnesty International's researcher on Mexico.

"The possibility that scores of bodies may be unearthed in the graves underlines the crucial importance of conducting meticulous forensic investigations designed to identify the victims, establish the precise circumstances, manner and cause of their death, and ensure that those implicated do not escape the full rigour of the law."

The Mexican authorities have stated that on-site forensic work initiated two days ago near Ciudad Juárez and close to the border with the United States of America (USA) concerns the "disappearance" of some 100 persons who fell victim to organized drug-traffickers. However, Amnesty International has information which indicates that some of those "disappeared" were last seen in the custody of people believed to be members of the Mexican security forces.

The organization has long been calling for full and independent investigations into "disappearances" in Mexico reported to have taken place in the context of anti-narcotics operations. To date little if any progress has been made in resolving these cases.

The new impulse to the investigations into these "disappearances" under the direction of Mexico's Office of the Attorney General, *Procuraduría General de la República*, with the collaboration of the USA Federal Bureau of Investigation, will hopefully result in the victims' families establishing the fate of their loved ones.

"The findings will also hopefully serve as a basis for the authorities to open criminal proceedings against anyone implicated in the deaths, no matter whether they be civilians or state agents," concluded the organization.

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**For further information please see Amnesty International, Mexico: "Disappearances": a black hole in the protection of human rights, AI Index: AMR 41/05/98, May 1998. To arrange an interview, please call Soraya Bermejo, Americas Press Officer on +4 171 413 5562 or, after office hours: +44 378 472 116**

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