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Mexico: Government's fine words on human rights defy reality

The Mexican government's fine words on human rights bear little resemblance to its actions on the ground, Amnesty International said one day before the country's comes under the scrutiny of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

"While the Mexican government is unrivalled in its rhetorical commitment to human rights, it continues to fail to take the decisive measures it committed to," said Rupert Knox, Amnesty International's Mexico researcher.

"The government's claim that it 'has secured momentous advances to guarantee the promotion, protection and defence of human rights' is far from the truth."

According to Amnesty International the Mexican government has failed in its promise to comply with recommendations made by the Council to ensure the protection of human rights in 2009.

They included the implementation of measures to end torture and enforced disappearances, assure effective investigation and accountability for human rights violations and, overall, place protection of human rights at centre of public security policy. It also promised to effectively combat abuses against migrants and violence against women and to ensure respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples.

"The Mexican state report says that it has delivered all these commitments, but grave human rights violations such as enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings by police and security forces are an ongoing. The pattern of impunity is constant and the failure to fulfil commitments on a range of issues is evident," said Knox.

Amnesty International's submission to the UNHRC details cases which highlight Mexico's failings.

In July and the beginning of August this year, according to witnesses, marines detained and enforcibly disappeared four people in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas state.

"In this case, as in many others, there has been no serious investigation and the relatives of the disappeared have obtained nothing from the authorities but silence," said Knox.

The body of one of the victims, who had been shot, has since been found. The Navy continues to deny its involvement in his detention and killing.

"Authorities are still turning a blind eye to human rights violations. The new government, like the previous one, claims that protection of human rights is at the heart of its public security operations. However, arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment and disappearances continue to impact the lives of thousands of Mexicans."

In February 2011, Miriam Isaura López Vargas, a 30-year-old mother of four was detained by soldiers

dressed in plain clothes, while she was returning home after taking her children to school. The men blindfolded her and took her to a military barrack where she was tortured with electric shocks and repeatedly sexually assaulted.

She was detained for seven months. After she was acquitted and released, she decided to pursue a legal claim for torture against those responsible. Despite the evidence obtained, more than two and a half years on, the official investigation has still not filed charges against those responsible.

Enforced disappearances and torture are not the only human rights violations in Mexico.

Reforms to migration legislation have not been effectively implemented to protect migrants' rights. Hundreds of migrants continue to be kidnapped, raped, killed or simply disappear each year. Migrants' rights defenders face frequent threats and attacks. Those responsible are almost never brought to justice.

An agency to protect human rights defenders and journalists at risk was established in law, but is only partially operational. By October 2013, 98 activists and journalists had sought protection from the agency, following threats and attacks, but many have not received a timely or effective response.

Violence against women remains widespread. Federal and local laws enacted since 2007 have been largely inadequate or not enforced, leaving women and girls at risk.

Indigenous people are routinely denied access to justice. Measures introduced to reduce their marginalization are insufficient. There is also a lack of adequate consultation over large scale industrial and extractive projects on their native lands.

The government has failed to reform the military justice to ensure allegations of human rights violations are dealt with by the civilian justice system. Likewise, it has refused to do anything to ensure that those responsible for the grave human rights violations committed during the "dirty war" of 60s, 70s and 80s are brought to justice.

"If the Mexican government is serious about human rights, it has to do more than come out with bold proclamations and fine words. It must act and fully implement the recommendations set out by the United Nations," said Rupert Knox.

Background information:

Amnesty International's [submission to the the Human Rights Council](#) and [response to Mexico's National Report](#).