

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR 41/039/2004 (Public)
News Service Number: 248
6 October 2004

Mexico: Strengthening the National Human Rights Commission is the task of all

It is essential that the Human Rights Committee of the Senate of the Republic undertakes a wide and transparent consultation of civil society with regard to the selection process for the next head of the National Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos - CNDH*), Amnesty International said today.

The Senate has to conclude the process of appointing the CNDH President no later than the middle of November of this year.

In a letter sent to the Senate's Human Rights Committee on 5 October, Amnesty International highlighted the recommendations made by the United Nations and Amnesty International in terms of guaranteeing the credibility and capacity of national human rights institutions throughout the world.

"It is the Senate Committee's responsibility to comply with these guidelines in order to ensure that the process is a fair and transparent one and that it contributes to strengthening the national institutions and to protecting human rights," said Amnesty International.

"Civil participation, particularly that of the community of human rights defenders, must not be limited to the mere formal presentation of possible candidates but must form an open and dynamic process through which to discuss and agree the criteria for selecting the ideal candidates. This dialogue is essential to strengthening and ensuring the independence of such an important human rights body as the CNDH."

General information

This is the first time the Senate will have appointed the head of the CNDH. Law governing the CNDH stipulates that the Senate must undertake, "a wide consultation of social organisations representing the different sectors of society, as well as public and private bodies promoting or defending human rights". On the basis of this consultation, the Human Rights Committee will propose "a shortlist of candidates" to the plenary Senate, "from which the post holder will be chosen or, where appropriate, ratified in post".

In 1992, the UN Commission on Human Rights adopted the Principles relating to the status and functioning of national institutions for protection and promotion of human rights known as the "Paris Principles". In 2001, Amnesty International published "National Human Rights Institutions, Amnesty International's Recommendations for effective protection and promotion of human rights" (IOR 40/007/2001, 1 October 2001). Both documents specifically deal with the mechanisms for selecting the heads of institutions and civil society's full involvement in that process.

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