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Mexico must not repatriate injured migrants

The Mexican authorities should not forcibly repatriate three migrants shot and injured by security forces at the country's southern border, Amnesty International said on Thursday.

The three were part of a group of seven undocumented migrants from El Salvador and Ecuador who were shot at by Mexican security forces as they crossed into the state of Chiapas on 18 September.

One of the seven men, Víctor Alexander Melgar Lemus from El Salvador, was killed and all others were injured in the incident.

Three escaped Mexican authorities after the shooting at the military checkpoint. Two remain under police guard while they receive treatment in hospital, the other, an Ecuadorean citizen, has been held pending repatriation.

"We are extremely worried about the safety of the migrants who are in hospital," said Rupert Knox, Mexico researcher at Amnesty International. "We believe they may be intimidated or threatened by the security forces to stop them from making a complaint."

"The Mexican state now has a responsibility towards these men," said Rupert Knox. "They must ensure the men receive the appropriate medical treatment, that the abuse against them is investigated and that they are not repatriated."

According to the men -- who were being transported by migrant smugglers and had no documents -- their driver had slowed down when he approached a security checkpoint but as he was told to stop, he sped off. The officers at the checkpoint gave pursuit and opened fire on the truck, hitting it repeatedly. The truck broke down a few minutes later.

The migrants told local rights groups that both military and police officers arrived at the scene and began to interrogate them, then kicked and hit them with the butts of their guns. One of the men reported that he was struck directly on a gunshot wound.

The Mexican National Human Rights Commission has opened an inquiry into the incident, but it is not clear whether the federal or state Attorney General's Office have opened criminal investigations into the killing, the use of lethal force and subsequent ill-treatment of the migrants.