
Amnesty International

MONTHLY ACTION

ACTIVISM TEAM, Amnesty International UK
HRAC, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA



SEPTEMBER 2014

TORTURE IN MEXICO: OUT OF CONTROL

Call for an end to torture and impunity

Amnesty International's new report on Mexico ("*Out of control. Torture and other ill-treatment in Mexico*"), brings to light horrific cases of individuals ill-treated or tortured - *to death*, in some cases - by military and police forces across Mexico and highlights how impunity is the norm for perpetrators. Police and soldiers, often deployed in public security operations, routinely use torture as a way to extract "confessions" or "information" from criminal suspects or from people who are arrested for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. There has been a 600% rise in reports of torture and other ill-treatment in ten years (2003 to 2013) but the Mexican government is still not taking torture seriously, with slow and sub-standard investigations. Between 2006 and the end of 2013, the Federal Attorney General's Office (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR) opened 1,219 investigations for torture but filed charges in only 12 cases. The majority of those tortured by the police are people who are least likely to be able to file complaints and seek redress. People like Claudia Medina Tamariz, who was accused of being a member of a violent gang and taken by marines to a naval base where she was beaten, sexually assaulted and given electric shocks. To this date no one has been held to account for her torture.

"Torture is out of control in Mexico and it doesn't only affect the person suffering it, it hurts society as a whole."
Bárbara Italia Méndez, torture survivor, San Salvador Atenco, State of Mexico, Amnesty International interview, April 2014

What you need to do:

Write to the Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto calling on him to ensure that victims of torture receive prompt medical examinations in line with international standards, have access to independent doctors and that all allegations of torture are thoroughly investigated, with the perpetrators brought to justice. A sample letter to the President is attached with this mailing.

Target:

Lic. Enrique Peña Nieto, Residencia Oficial de los Pinos, Casa Miguel Alemán, Col. San Miguel Chapultepec, C.P. 11850, México D.F., Mexico

You can also email the President by filling out this form: <http://en.presidencia.gob.mx/contacto/>

EMBARGOED UNTIL 4 SEPTEMBER

Please note that the contents of this mailing, including the template letter, are embargoed until 4 September 2014, the launch date of the new report. Please do not circulate this mailing wider or put any of its contents online until after that date.

CONTENTS

- The guidance sheet
- Background information
- Sample Letter

GOT QUERIES OR WANT TO DO MORE?

If you have any queries about this action and for updates please contact: activism@amnesty.org.uk / 0207 033 1675
Local group's monthly mailing can be downloaded from:
www.amnesty.org.uk/groups

MONTHLY ACTION

Background Information

STOP TORTURE CAMPAIGN

Amnesty International has documented cases of torture in Mexico for over five decades. Torture was particularly acute during the “dirty war” against armed opposition groups and other perceived political opponents of the government (1964 to 1982). Torture has also been used for many decades against people suspected of ordinary criminal offences. The sharp rise in recent years coincides with an increased deployment of police and military personnel for public security operations against organised crime and to combat drug trafficking. Mexico’s current federal government seems to be open to introducing changes in the way it deals with torture complaints. Since 2013, Amnesty has been in frequent contact with the Federal Attorney General’s Office, has been granted unprecedented access to a sample of official forensic expert reports on allegations of torture and has submitted detailed recommendations on how to improve it. The recommendations were verbally welcomed, but the government is yet to take action. The launch of the new report provides the perfect opportunity to put global pressure on the Mexican authorities to improve their record on torture.

Report overview

The following are some of the key findings from the report, **Out of control. Torture and other ill-treatment in Mexico**:

- The Mexican government continues to deny the widespread use of torture and other ill-treatment.
 - The use of torture continues to be tolerated, despite Mexico’s relatively strong legislation to prevent and punish torture and other ill-treatment.
 - Mechanisms to hold those responsible to account are ineffective and fail to deter perpetrators or provide redress to victims.
 - Reports of torture increased as violence spiralled in Mexico after 2006 and were 600% higher in 2013 than 2003.
 - The police and military forces are also implicated in enforced disappearances.
 - The justice system is unable or unwilling to prevent torture; key anti-torture safeguards are rarely upheld.
 - Arbitrary detentions and the fabrication of evidence are often closely connected to the use of torture and other ill-treatment.
 - Medical examinations of suspects, including official procedures to investigate allegations of torture, often fall far short of international standards, including the UN backed Istanbul Protocol.
 - The shortcomings of Mexico’s justice system play a major role in the continuing prevalence of torture and other forms of ill-treatment and in the persistent culture of impunity.
- Read the full report “*Out of control. Torture and other ill-treatment in Mexico*” (from 4 September) at www.amnesty.org.uk/audia or at the Stop Torture campaign page <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/stoptorture>

Claudia Medina Tamariz

One of the cases highlighted in the report, Claudia Medina Tamariz, is a priority case for the Stop Torture campaign. On 7 August 2012, Claudia, a mother of three, was woken in the middle of the night when marines broke into her home in Veracruz City. They tied her hands and blindfolded her, before taking her to the local naval base. There, she was tortured using electric shocks, sexually assaulted, beaten, kicked and left tied to a chair in scorching afternoon heat. She was wrapped in plastic to minimise the marks from the beating.

The next day Claudia was blindfolded again and transferred to the Federal Attorney General’s Office with a group of other detainees. She was interrogated and a marine pressured her into signing a statement without allowing her to read it. Later that day, the authorities presented Claudia and other detainees to the media, claiming they were dangerous criminals who had been caught committing serious offences.

Claudia was later released on bail. She reported her torture, prompting a federal judge to request an investigation. Two years later, no investigation has taken place.

“I have seen that many people know about my case now, and this is formidable news. It allows me to share my story, to be seen and heard. I would like to thank Amnesty International for all the support you are giving me. God bless you all.”

Claudia Medina Tamariz, July 2014