

FOCUS

HUMAN RIGHTS
IN MEXICO



Page 10

Special
Edition
on
Torture

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2014

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
LAUNCHES WORLDWIDE ANTI-TORTURE CAMPAIGN

BREAKING THE SILENCE ALL TOGETHER AGAINST SEXUAL TORTURE



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ROMPIENDO EL SILENCIO
Todas juntas contra la tortura sexual

BREAKING THE SILENCE

All Together against Sexual Torture



• BELINDA GARZA MELO •

On June 26th, Belinda Garza Melo joined the campaign “Breaking the Silence” and denounced that she is a victim of the war against organized crime started by the previous administration. Seven years ago she was detained in Torreon, state of Coahuila, by the Federal Preventive Police and then physically, sexually and psychologically tortured for more than 40 hours. Three months later she was presented before the media a member of the Gulf Cartel.

She is currently imprisoned in a maximum security as jail in Tepic, state of Nayarit. Her voice demands justice so that no more women are tortured and, after seven years of having lost everything, Belinda demands her freedom.



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This special edition of Focus is dedicated to one of the gravest human rights violations in our world: torture. We especially dedicate this edition to all survivors of torture.

Torture is by definition an intentional act committed by those who have power. This crime seeks to control and annul the human personality or erode the physical or mental resistance of the victim, using physical, sexual, and/or psychological pain and suffering to obtain a certain result: a confession, punishment, the criminalization of the victim (even for a crime that has not been committed), or any other goal.

There is a highly developed legal framework that establishes an absolute prohibition on torture. International human rights law prohibits torture with the same force as the prohibition on genocide and slavery. Physical, sexual, and/or psychological torture are forbidden under any circumstances, even during wartime or public emergencies.

This prohibition is so universally accepted that it forms part of international law at the level of *ius cogens*, the highest category of binding law. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has repeatedly held that, "There is an international legal system that absolutely forbids all forms of torture, both physical and psychological, and this system is now part of *ius cogens*. Prohibition of torture is complete and non-derogable, even under the most difficult circumstances..."

However, in Mexico the use of torture is "widespread" according to UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Dr. Juan Méndez, who concluded after visiting the country between April 21st and May 2nd that no security force in Mexico respects the prohibition on torture. The Rapporteur's message was damning: "I have the duty to inform the Mexican government, but also the Mexican people, that there is an epidemic of torture here that must be corrected."

This edition of Focus also seeks to explore the differentiated vulnerability and use of torture against women who are detained by security forces in Mexico, particularly the use of sexual torture, which seeks to transform women's bodies into battlefields, employing physical and psychological techniques that clearly fit within an over-arching context of institutionalized gender violence and discrimination.

Last month, Center Prodh and partner organizations, as well as Amnesty International, launched two respective campaigns against torture: "Breaking the Silence: All Together against Sexual Torture" and "Stop Torture," both of which call for an end to this brutal practice in general and push for the Mexican government to stop using torture as a primary "investigation" method, often against innocent people.

Torture isn't justice. Torture is a crime, an attack on human dignity, and a synonym of impunity that must be eradicated. 

ÁNGEL AMÍLCAR:

IMPRISONED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

Ángel Amílcar Colón was born on October 21, 1976 in the community of Plaplaya, in the municipality of Juan Francisco Bulnes, department of Gracias a Dios, Honduras. He is the ninth child in a family of ten brothers and sisters.

His father, Juan Colón, was a fisherman and died when Ángel was nine months old. His mother, Jacinta Raquel, worked to support her children and despite their economic difficulties, the family remained united. Jacinta Raquel passed away in October 2013.

In his youth, Ángel Amílcar entered the San Pedro Apóstol seminary in Sangrelaya Irióna, in Colón, Honduras, to prepare himself to become a priest. His spiritual mentor during this time was Ismael Moreno Coto, S.J., director of the Center for Reflection, Investigation, and Communication (ERIC, Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación) and of Radio Progreso. Later, he entered the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the Ramón Rosa Institute. However, he decided that his destiny was not to be a priest and moved to the city of San Pedro Sula in Cortés, where he entered the Northern Regional University Center to study engineering.

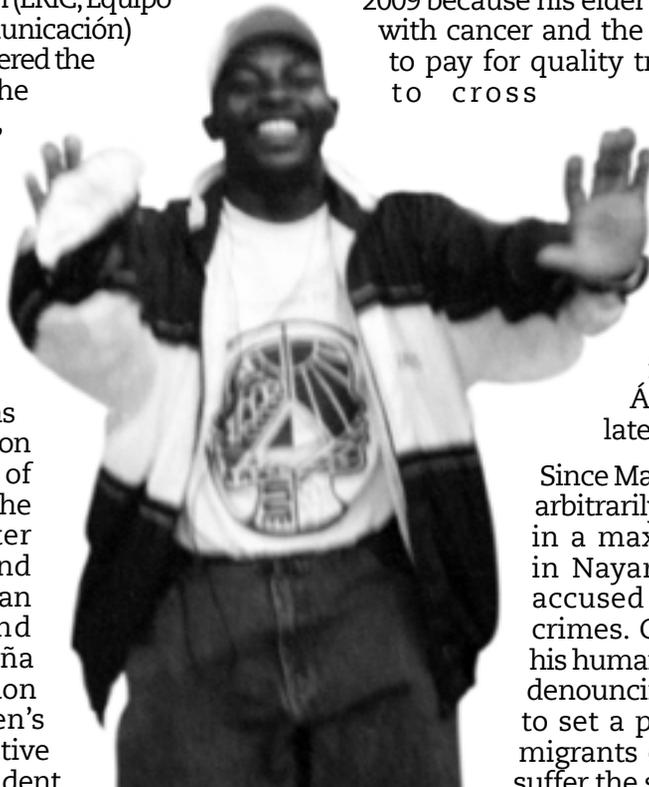
Ángel always stood out for his defense of human rights and his commitment to his ideals. He was President of the Student Association of the Autonomous University of Honduras and participated in the 21st Afro-American Encounter in Honduras. Between 2001 and 2003 he worked in the Honduran Association for Women and Families (Asociación Hondureña Mujer y Familia), an organization dedicated to protecting women's access to sexual and reproductive health services. He was also President

of the Fraternal Organization of Afro-Hondurans (Ofraneh, Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña). As a member of Ofraneh, Ángel participated in the litigation of the case of López Álvarez vs. Honduras in the Inter-American Human Rights System, which was decided favorably by the Inter-American Court, establishing important precedents regarding due process and cultural rights.

Ángel also fell in love with July Alexandra, with whom he had two children: Ángel Elvir, born in 2001, and Alex, born in 2006. Ángel Amílcar left Honduras in 2009 because his elder son had been diagnosed with cancer and the family lacked resources to pay for quality treatment. Ángel sought to cross

Mexico to the United States in order to find a job that paid enough to afford medical attention for his son. However, as readers will recall, Ángel was arbitrarily detained and incarcerated in Mexico in March 2009. His son Ángel Elvir died six months later.

Since March 2009, Ángel has been arbitrarily deprived of his liberty in a maximum security prison in Nayarit, Tepic State, falsely accused of a series of federal crimes. Currently, he continues his human rights activism through denouncing his case and seeking to set a precedent so that other migrants crossing Mexico do not suffer the same fate. ✈



Ángel Amílcar before being arbitrarily detained and imprisoned/Photo: Special

"INTOLERABLE" LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND "WIDESPREAD" EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN MEXICO: CONCLUSIONS OF UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR

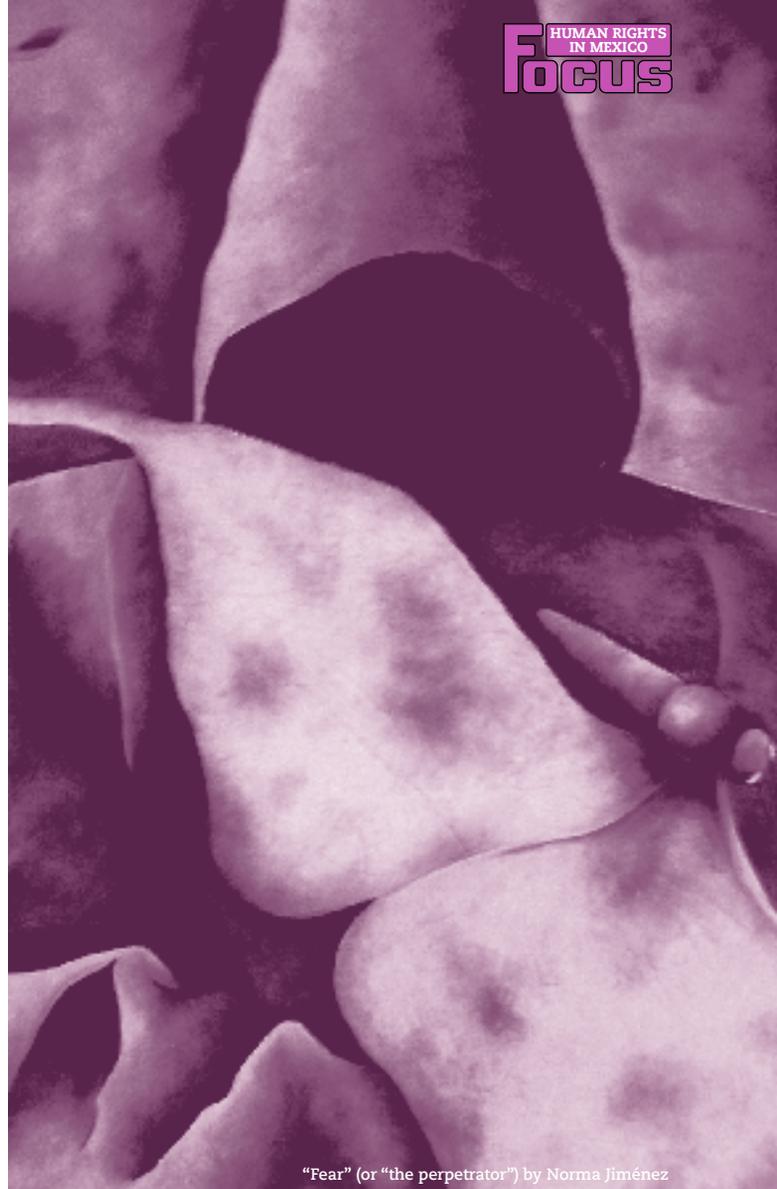
Following an official visit to Mexico from April 22nd to May 2, 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, Christof Heyns, found an "alarming high rate" of violations to the right to life, as well as generalized impunity for the "widespread" executions committed by both state and non-state actors in the country.

In his final report (UN document A/HRC/26/36/Add.1), the Special Rapporteur documented the grave consequences of the militarization of public security in Mexico, noting that "from 2006 to April 2013... three out of four [National Human Rights Commission] recommendations involving the right to life were directed at the armed forces." He signaled:

"The gravity of the current situation must be faced squarely: the right to life is under serious threat in Mexico and addressing it should be a top national priority. A heavy-handed military approach is unlikely to improve the situation. What is called for is systematic, holistic and comprehensive strengthening of the rule of law, a critical element of which is ensuring accountability for abuses."

The Rapporteur stressed that the new federal administration's change in public discourse to de-emphasize violence in the national and international media is not necessarily a good sign: "A decreased emphasis by public authorities on the subject of violence and crime may not reflect actual decreases in commissions of violent crimes in fact. During the course of his visit, the Special Rapporteur received extensive information indicating that killings and impunity for homicide continue to be widespread in many parts of the country."

Heyns stressed that the common practice of "inventing guilty people" (that is, falsely accusing



"Fear" (or "the perpetrator") by Norma Jiménez

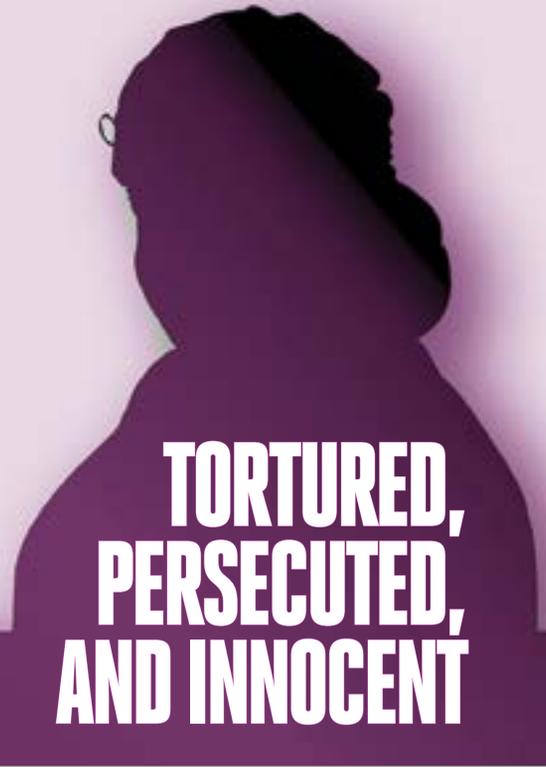
people of crimes they did not commit, often under torture) must be stopped as a matter of priority, since "the use of such scapegoats makes a mockery of justice. While this may create an illusion of accountability, it in fact results in a double injustice."

The Rapporteur also recalled that the government has the duty to investigate and provide justice for state crimes of past decades, such as extrajudicial executions committed during the country's "Dirty War" of the 1960s and 1970s. He mentioned the case of Diego Lucero as an especially grave example of these crimes, all of which remain in impunity today.

Center Prodh calls on the Mexican government to implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, among them, to create an independent national forensic institute to help guarantee professionalized and scientific investigations of extrajudicial executions as well as fair, evidence-based trials in the criminal justice system and the recommendation for Mexico to create a "safe corridor" for migrants in transit, given the extremely grave situation of this population. 



CLAUDIA MEDINA:



**TORTURED,
PERSECUTED,
AND INNOCENT**

Two years ago, Claudia Medina's life changed radically and for the worse. Since that day in August 2012, she and her family have not known peace, and they feel that nothing will ever be the same.

Claudia is a 33-year-old mother of three from Veracruz State, who used to dedicate her time to her family and to her growing business selling nutritional products. But two years ago she was arbitrarily detained and tortured by members of Mexico's Navy (Marina). She was brought before the media in a press conference and exhibited as a criminal. Eventually most of the false accusations against her would collapse, but she continues to face trial for one of them, a charge commonly invented to justify arbitrary detentions: possession of weapons.

The "evidence" against Claudia is limited to the false version of her detention told by her torturers and a statement that Claudia signed under torture while she was held incommunicado in a naval base. Prosecutorial authorities, in a completely irregular act, would later use this same exact evidence to file a new and different criminal charge against Claudia, supposedly having to do with the possession of a stolen vehicle.

In detail: the facts of the case

On August 7, 2012, between 3am and 4am, a group of armed naval officers burst into Claudia's house in Veracruz City. Claudia thought they were burglars and woke her husband, Isaías Flores Pineda, just as the naval officers broke the lock on the bedroom door.

Claudia and her husband were violently dragged out of bed and brought to a naval base in Veracruz. Claudia was subjected to beatings, asphyxia, electric shocks, and sexual and psychological torture. Her captors told her that she had to confess to being a member of the Jalisco "New Generation" Cartel. This hellish ordeal would last for 36 hours.

When the torturers threatened to harm her children, Claudia said she would confess to anything they wanted. She would later be forced to sign a statement implicating herself and her husband in criminal activity.

The naval officers filled out a report dated August 8th in which they invented a false version of the detention, and they brought Claudia to the local facilities of the federal Attorney General's Office (PGR), where they presented her, her husband, and other detained individuals in a press conference, even before bothering to transfer custody of the detainees to the PGR (a flagrant violation of the Mexican Constitution).

On August 11th, Claudia was transferred to the Female Preventive and Readaptation Center (prison) in Cienaguillas, Zacatecas State, charged with nine serious criminal offenses in the investigation AP/PGR/VER/VER/III/587/2012. On August 19th, the Third District Judge of Veracruz in the city of Boca del Río ruled that she should be tried in criminal case 186/2012 for possession of weapons and cartridges and for crimes against health.

With the support of her public defender, Claudia managed to annul all the charges exception weapons possession, and was freed on bail on August 21st.

The search for justice

In October 2012, Claudia filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) and one month later sought the support of Center Prodh and fellow NGO Collective Against Torture and Impunity (CCTI).

It was not until July 9, 2013 that the CNDH examined her and documented the physical and psychological evidence of the torture she had suffered.

Currently, Claudia is fighting a legal battle to be recognized as a victim of torture, arbitrary detention, and other abuses, and calls upon the CNDH to issue a recommendation on her case to the Navy and the PGR.

In April 2014, Claudia also met with Juan E. Méndez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment. And last May 5th, Claudia joined and co-inaugurated the campaign "Breaking the Silence: All Together Against Sexual Torture," at the invitation of the women denouncing sexual torture in the case of San Salvador Atenco (see related article).



CLAUDIA MEDINA SPEAKS OUT ABOUT HER CASE/PHOTO: CÉSAR MARTÍNEZ LÓPEZ

With the support of her public defender, Claudia managed to annul all the charges exception weapons possession, and was freed on bail on August 21st.

Claudia cannot forget what she lived through. Now she seeks to clear her name and achieve victory in her case before the public, her family, and most of all, for her children. And she won't stop fighting until she has reached that goal: "In spite of the fear I feel, I'm speaking out, and I call on other women in my position to do the same." 

Silence can be a torture survivor's worst enemy, eroding both mental and physical resilience after trauma. The path to breaking this silence and placing the stigma for grave acts of violence where it belongs – with the perpetrator, not the survivor – requires individual and collective strength. For Ana Maria, Yolanda, Patricia, Edith, Italia, Norma, and Mariana, who survived acts of sexual torture committed in the course of the abusive police operations of May 2006 in the town of Atenco, Mexico State, this path is best walked together. These women belong to a group of 11 survivors who, on the 8th anniversary of the repression and torture committed in Atenco last month, sent a powerful message to the national and international community: survivors of sexual torture are never alone. On the contrary, numerous similar cases in Mexico of women who denounce sexual torture and fight for justice show the use of this type of torture as a tool of repression and control.

TORTURE:

MEXICO'S TRADITIONAL METHOD OF "INVESTIGATION"

The use of torture dates back to time immemorial, but the basic intention of this practice remains the same: to impose the domination of one group over another. Growing condemnation of torture throughout the world inspired the creation of various international treaties that prohibit and seek to abolish this practice.

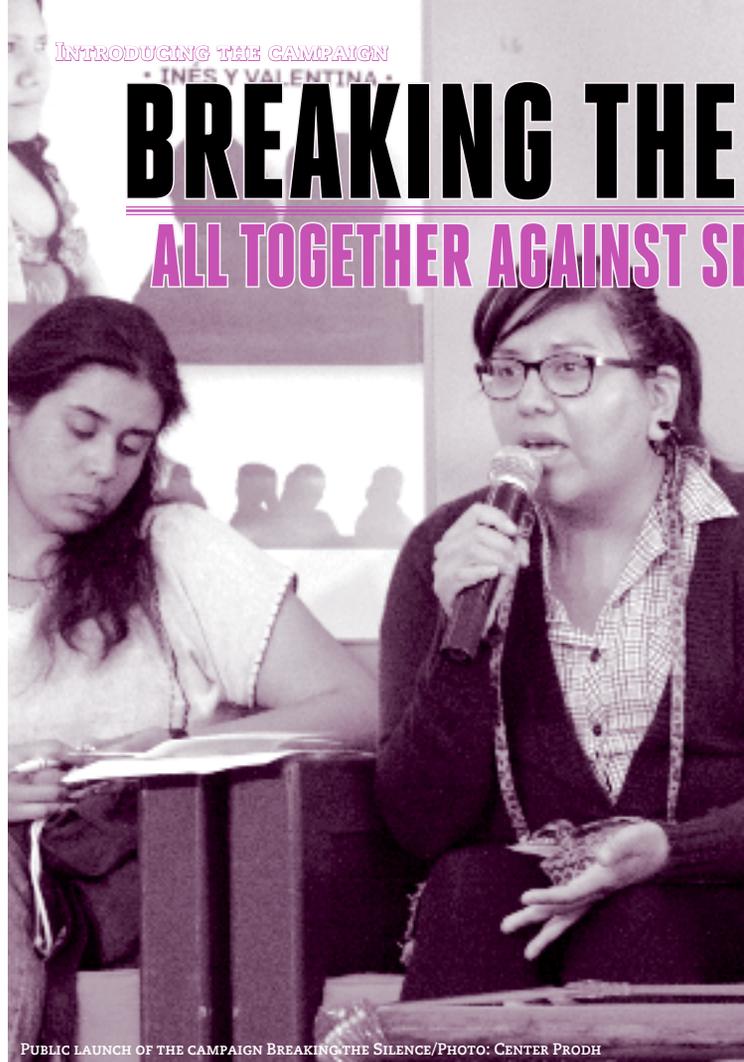
It goes without saying that Mexico has the legal duty to respect this worldwide prohibition, a duty that, while recently codified in the Constitution, was crystal clear decades ago, from the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the series of binding UN and Inter-American treaties ratified by the Mexican government in the following decades. Yet those same decades witnessed the widespread use of torture against dissidents during the period known as the "Dirty War" in prisons, military bases, and clandestine detention centers.

In the government's "counterinsurgency" strategy, torture was seen as the first option against detained individuals, and the crimes committed by the Mexican government during the 1960s and 1970s tore apart resistance movements, largely through the brutal and sadistic acts suffered by both men and women committed to their ideals. But instead of abolishing the use of torture to ensure that such atrocities never again occur, today the Mexican military and police forces systematically torture at all levels, now to obtain confessions and statements (often false) from individuals detained in the "war on crime". This is the new class of "enemies" held up before the public as justification for acts that amount to state terrorism, even when many of the detained victims are innocent of any crime, with the real perpetrators going free.

INTRODUCING THE CAMPAIGN

• INÉS Y VALENTINA •

BREAKING THE ALL TOGETHER AGAINST SI



PUBLIC LAUNCH OF THE CAMPAIGN BREAKING THE SILENCE/PHOTO: CENTER PRODH

On May 5, 2014, marking eight years in their fight for justice, the women of Atenco who are currently litigating their case in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights launched the campaign "Breaking the Silence: All Together Against Sexual Torture," which seeks to connect different cases that share this pattern. Just one year ago, the women found themselves thanking the thousands of people throughout the world who have shown them solidarity during their struggle. This time around, the women decided it was their turn to show solidarity with other survivors: both those who have gone before them, and those whose path to justice is just beginning.

Sexual torture as a tool to break the will of female victims (who may be subjected both to political repression and to gender stereotypes that affirm that women's bodies are available to be objects of violence) often follows a particular modus operandi, especially the objectification of female sexuality (through sexual violence) mixed with forcing the women to perform menial tasks in captivity, classified as "woman's work" (such as cleaning, washing clothes, etc.) This sends the message that women's bodies can be used by the torturers as they please.

SILENCE

SEXUAL TORTURE



The human rights obligations of the Mexican government when its agents commit such acts include the immediate investigation and timely trial and punishment of the perpetrators; this duty is all the more crucial in a country where almost universal impunity continues to give torturers at all levels a green light to continue committing abuses. However, the reality of how authorities react to criminal complaints of sexual torture is almost always the diametric opposite, and commonly includes stigmatization, questioning the survivor's story, and revictimization. This stark reality leads many women not to wish to speak out about what they have experienced.

That is why the women of Atenco and other sexual torture survivors have joined their voices in the message "all together", calling on survivors, organizations, activists, and the public to speak out and to recognize that silence is just another tool that benefits the torturers and hurts the survivors. The campaign participants are convinced that sexual torture embodies the worst consequences of a culture of abuse, impunity, and sexism, personified in this case by

perpetrators who belong to military and police forces, among others.

The campaign launched on May 5th is circulating in social media (@CentroProdh and facebook.com/prodh) and will culminate on November 25th with a public event to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The original campaign participants, in addition to the women of Atenco, include Claudia Medina Tamariz (tortured by members of the Navy), whose case is defended by Center Prodh; indigenous women Inés Fernández and Valentina Rosendo (tortured by soldiers), whose case is defended by the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center; and Miriam López (tortured by soldiers) and Verónica Razo (tortured by federal investigators), defended by the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights. And the list of participants continues to grow. ✂

ROMPIENDO EL SILENCIO
Todas juntas contra la tortura sexual



• VERÓNICA • • MIRIAM • • MUJERES DENUNCIANTES DE TORTURA SEXUAL EN ATENCO • • INÉS Y VALENTINA • • CLAUDIA MEDINA •



SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT IN THE CASE OF ISRAEL ARZATE: HISTORIC PRECEDENT AGAINST TORTURE

As readers will recall, Israel Arzate, a young man from Ciudad Juárez who was tortured by soldiers and accused of crimes he did not commit, was liberated by a November 2013 judgment of the First Chamber of Mexico's Supreme Court (SCJN for its initials in Spanish). In May 2014, the full text of the Court's written judgment was made public. The nine concrete judicial precedents established in the case constitute an important advance in the struggle to eradicate torture in Mexico.

This is especially true because these precedents provide guidelines for all the courts and tribunals in the country, and if the Supreme Court reaffirms these precedents in other cases, they will become binding jurisprudence for all Mexican judges.

In its judgment, the SCJN reiterated the absolute prohibition on torture and noted the double dimension of this form of abuse, as both a human rights violation and a crime. Due to its extremely severe nature, the Court found that torture is a

“special category” of human rights violation that generates an obligation for authorities to adhere to the highest national and international standards when responding to all complaints of torture, with the aim of effectively protecting the victim's rights.

In this sense, the Court stated that when any authority is informed of acts of torture or has indications that torture may have occurred, he or she must immediately inform the relevant investigatory authority (ministerio público) in order to ensure that the acts of torture are investigated promptly in an impartial, independent process with the aim of sanctioning those responsible.

According to the SCJN's judgment, a complaint of torture is not limited to a formal criminal complaint, but rather any type of information or communication to any authority. Thus, no authority can assert that he or she does not have a duty to respond to complaints of torture. Additionally, if the person

denouncing torture is the defendant in a criminal trial, the authorities must initiate an investigation of torture regardless of the time that has elapsed between the acts of abuse and the complaint (a relevant rule given that many torture victims cannot immediately denounce the abuse suffered, since they continue to be held in irregular detention; in such cases, complaints tend to be made at a later time, before a judge).

The Court confirmed the general rule that illicitly obtained evidence is inadmissible in criminal proceedings and specified that this is especially true in cases of torture.

In an important precedent, the Court established that the right to personal liberty is a human right of the highest order under national and international law, and that all persons have the legitimate expectation not to be deprived of their liberty except in the most exceptional cases and for reasons that are fully justified under the law as explicitly established in the Constitution and international treaties.

It follows, according to the SCJN, that when a state agent detains someone and alleges that the person was caught in flagrante delicto (in the middle of committing a crime), the authority must demonstrate this fact with objective and reasonable evidence and/or arguments. If the detention does not meet these standards, it will be considered arbitrary and all evidence obtained because of it will be declared inadmissible. This is an extremely important precedent because it attacks the incentives that currently encourage authorities to commit arbitrary detentions and torture to obtain illicit evidence.

The Court established that prosecutorial and judicial authorities have the duty to carry out a strict and rigorous supervision and control of the conditions of detention of persons deprived of their liberty and to order the immediate liberation of any person who was arbitrarily detained. These obligations are heightened when there are indications or a complaint of grave human rights violations, in which case authorities must also save all pieces of evidence or information related to the acts denounced (in this case, torture) to facilitate the investigation.

In this case, Israel Arzate's complaint of torture was proven to be true, among others, when the National Human Rights Commission examined him and found clear marks of torture on his body, following standards established in the Istanbul Protocol (the UN's internationally certified set of guidelines on investigating torture and documenting the medical and psychological effects of this form of abuse). However, the federal judge reviewing Israel's case refused to admit the Commission's medical examination as evidence. Thus, the SCJN



recalled that federal judges hearing these types of cases have the duty to admit and give due weight to evidence of torture.

While the precedents mentioned above are currently guidelines, and will need to be repeated in four more cases in order to attain the level of binding jurisprudence, the case of Israel Arzate is without doubt a sign of hope for the vast universe of torture victims in Mexico. The SCJN's precedents in this case are clear steps forward and will be of particular use in consolidating the new oral, adversarial justice system, which will enter into force in all of Mexico in 2016. As the case of Israel shows, this new oral trial system by itself will not end torture unless it is accompanied by judicial practices and rulings that respect human rights, leading to a true transformation of the criminal justice system. ✎

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LAUNCHES WORLDWIDE ANTI-TORTURE CAMPAIGN



PHOTO: PROMETEO LUCERO

On May 13th, Amnesty International launched a new global campaign called "Stop Torture," with the aim of raising awareness and building pressure against this practice, which is as alive as ever in our world. The campaign, launched globally from the organization's London headquarters, calls on governments to end their hypocritical discourse around this grave human rights violation and take real action against it.

Salil Shetty, Secretary General of AI, presented the document, "Torture in 2014: Stories of Modern Horror," a result of the organization's research into torture in more than 141 countries. The campaign launch included the participation of Bárbara Italia Méndez, one of the 11 women who survived sexual torture in San Salvador Atenco in 2006 and who continue to litigate their case in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Bárbara Italia met with authorities from the United Kingdom and the European Union, students, academics, and the press

in order to denounce the systematic use of torture in Mexico, which is one of the five focus countries of Amnesty's global campaign.

In its country briefing on Mexico, Amnesty highlights several paradigmatic cases of torture, including those of Claudia Medina Tamariz and Ángel Amílcar Colón Quevedo, who were tortured by members of the Navy, the Army, and the police, respectively.

Given the current crisis of torture not only in Mexico but in diverse parts of the world, we support the Stop Torture campaign and hope that our readers will join this effort to force governments to move beyond hollow condemnations of torture and to end this practice once and for all.

The campaign materials are available here: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/amnesty-international-global-crisis-torture-exposed-new-worldwide-campaign-2014-05-13>.

JUNE 26TH: INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE



PHOTO: PEP COMPANYYS

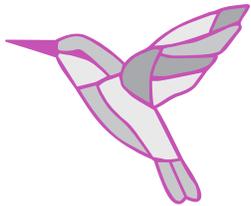
As one of the worst atrocities committed in the world, torture is prohibited absolutely, under all circumstances, both at the national and international level. Mexico in particular clearly stipulates that torture is prohibited, and reformed its Constitution in 2011 to recognize the binding nature of human rights treaties. But these legal prohibitions have not ended the endemic practice of torture in the country.

For this reason, a day of special significance in our country is June 26th, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. On December 12, 1997, the UN General Assembly, acting on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council, proclaimed this international day, which is meant to contribute to the total eradication of this crime and the effective application of the

UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Torture, by definition, violates the right to personal integrity, both physical and psychological. Survivors may require physical rehabilitation, and often present post-traumatic stress. Returning to daily life is no easy task, as survivors may have lost all trust in authorities, other people, and society. And the search for justice is generally characterized by obstacles, delays, and revictimization.

On this June 26th, it is crucial that we all show solidarity to torture survivors as they fight against impunity and seek justice, knowing that the rule of law in a democratic society is only possible when human rights are fully respected. ✈



JACINTA FRANCISCO MARCIAL

This past May 28th, the plenary of the Superior Chamber of the Federal Tribunal for Fiscal and Administrative Justice (TFJFA for its initials in Spanish) ruled by an 8-2 majority that the federal Attorney General's Office (PGR) must pay hñãñhú indigenous woman Jacinta Francisco Marcial economic compensation for the moral and material damages caused by her unjust imprisonment during a period of more than three years, as well as offer her a public apology for having falsely accused her of kidnapping six armed federal agents.

This historic judgment, together with the two previous legal victories from November 20, 2013 in the parallel cases of Alberta Alcántara Juan and Teresa González Cornelio, establishes binding jurisprudence in the realm of administrative law. This means that thanks to these three women's cases, other innocent people can sue for reparations after being unjustly imprisoned due to human rights violations.

"Jacinta, you were right" reads the judgment, which was published in a modified, plain-language format by the TFJFA. But Jacinta isn't the only one who deserves to read such a message. In her own words, "when I was in prison, I witnessed all the innocent people who were there. This lawsuit isn't about money, it's about justice." Now, we call on the PGR to comply with the reparations orders, and the Judicial Branch to confirm them as necessary (the PGR has filed appeals against the first two judgments), so that this precedent in favor of reparations can truly begin to put an end to impunity.

UPDATES

UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR FINDS "GENERALIZED" TORTURE IN MEXICO

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Professor Juan Méndez, visited Mexico from April 22 to May 2, 2014, finding in his preliminary conclusions that torture in Mexico is "generalized." During the visit he received "an alarming number of reports and credible testimonies, as well as documentation of cases, regarding [torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment] committed by diverse authorities, including the armed forces, municipal, state, and federal police, and state and federal prosecutorial agents."

Méndez found that the use of torture is "excessively related to obtaining coerced confessions" and noted the "elevated number of reports related to the invention of evidence and the false incrimination of people as a consequence of the use of torture..." He expressed "extreme concern over the lack of effective investigations for these crimes" and "the near-total absence, at both the federal and state levels, of convictions", leading to a "cycle of impunity" and "non-compliance" with the government's obligation to investigate torture.

The Rapporteur is currently drafting his full report, which should be presented to the UN Human Rights Council and made public later this year.

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Since being founded by the Jesuits in 1988, the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Center Prodh) has worked to defend, promote, and increase respect for human rights in Mexico, with a focus on social groups that find themselves in situations of vulnerability such as indigenous populations, women, migrants and victims of social repression.

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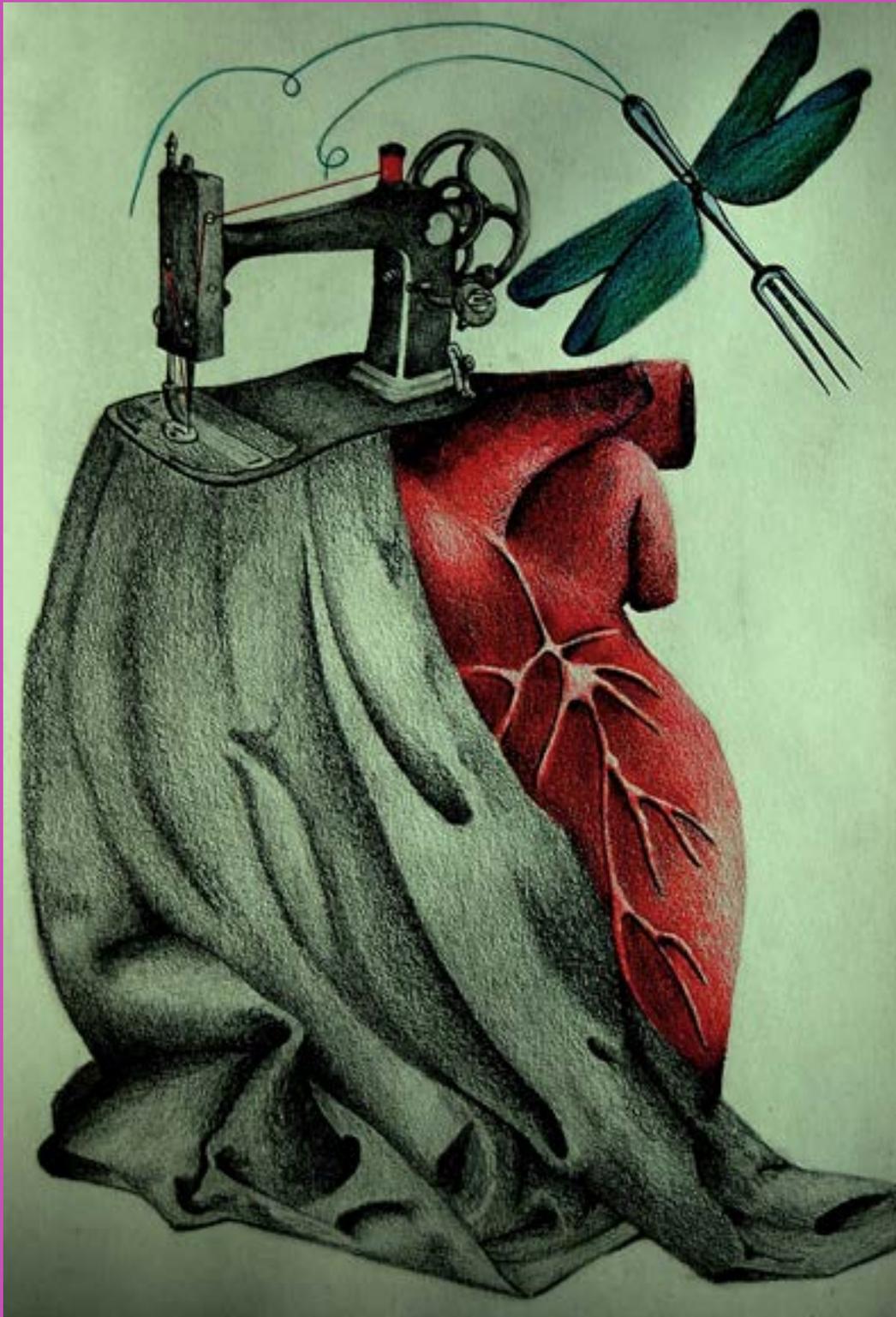
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