



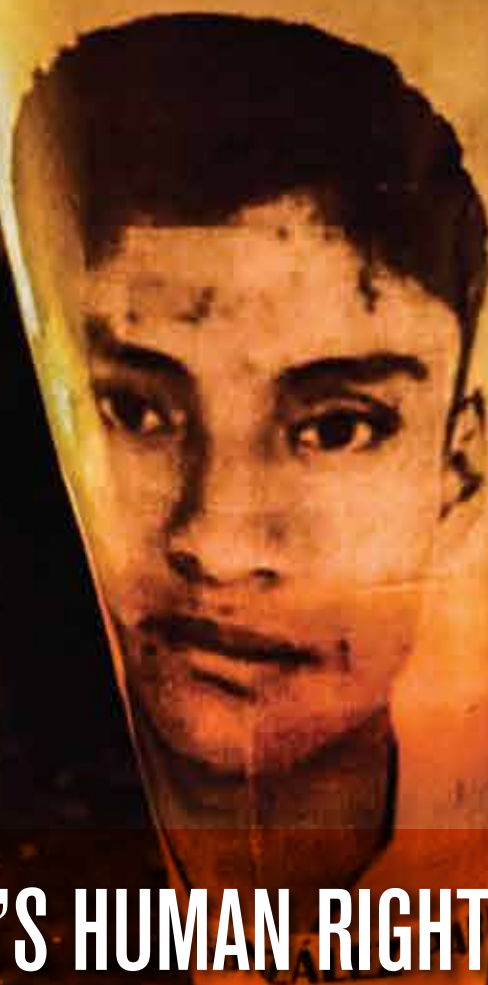
FOCUS

QUARTERLY HUMAN RIGHTS MAGAZINE

SPRING 2015 #07

Centro
Prodh
CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS
MIGUEL AGUIRRE Y FIO JORGE S.C.

Alumno desaparecido de
Ayotzinapa, Gro.



MEXICO'S HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS:

We examine victims' fight against enforced
disappearances and sexual torture

Directory

Mario Ernesto Patrón Sánchez
DIRECTOR

Santiago Aguirre Espinosa
SUBDIRECTOR

THE CENTER PRODH TEAM

DIRECTION AND ADMINISTRATION

Alejandra Govea Briseño
Hiram Gutiérrez Bautista
José de Jesús Maldonado García
José Luis Alvarado Rodríguez
Juan Limón
Juan Carlos López López
Mireya López Cruz

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AREA

Alexandra Jiménez Martínez
Yeny Santiago Alcaraz

INTEGRAL DEFENSE AREA

Anallely Álvarez Chávez
Andrés Marcelo Díaz Fernández
Araceli Magdalena Olivos Portugal
Enrique Alejandro García Ramírez
Gabriela Carreón Lee
Luis Eliud Tapia Olivares

INTERNATIONAL AREA

Sofía de Robina Castro
Stephanie Erin Brewer

EDUCATION AREA

Laura Estela Mendoza Gómez
Meyatzin Velasco Santiago
Pilar Carolina Arrese Alcalá
Victor Hugo Carlos Banda

COMMUNICATIONS AREA

Adazahira Chávez Pérez
David Eduardo Mirafuentes Ortega
Gabriel Mendoza Zárate
Jorge Atilano González Candia
Narce Dalia Santibañez Alexandre
Xosé Roberto Figueroa Rivera

PROGRAM FOR PEACEBUILDING AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Gabriel Mendoza Zárate
Jorge Atilano González Candia

EDITOR

Adazahira Chávez Pérez

DESIGN

David Eduardo Mirafuentes Ortega

COVER PHOTO

From the compilation by *Desinformémonos* and Tlachinollan Human Rights Center.

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.

Serapio Rendón 57-B, Col. San Rafael,
México City, Tels: (0155) 5546 8217, (55)
5566 7854, (55) 5535 6892 / Fax: ext. 108

Contents

01 Editorial

02 Recommendations from the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture: crucial to ending impunity in Mexico

04 43 families sharing the same pain

06 Inter-American Commission holds hearings on a range of serious human rights issues in Mexico

08 Decades of enforced disappearance, impunity and complicity

10 Ángel Amílcar, now free, begins the fight for truth, justice, and reparations

11 Judicial authorities acknowledge innocence of Claudia Medina, survivor of sexual torture

12 Update on *Breaking the Silence: All Together Against Sexual Torture*



Demonstration in solidarity with Ayotzinapa, 2014.
Photo: from the compilation by *Desinformémonos* and
Tlachinollan Human Rights Center.



OVER TWENTY-SIX YEARS AGO, A GROUP OF JESUITS FOUNDED THE Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Center Prodh) to respond to a reality in which human dignity was ignored and trampled. Following what they called “the signs of the times,” the Jesuits recognized with keen foresight that as the 1980s neared their close, it was time for the excluded and marginalized populations of Mexico to convert international human rights instruments into tools that could be used by victims to fight for a more just world.

A lot has happened since then. Civil society in Mexico has become a diverse, professionalized, and increasingly specialized sector. At the same time, the context could not be more challenging: the country is immersed in a national emergency in which grave human rights violations, such as those exemplified in high-profile cases of mass disappearance and extrajudicial executions, have shown clearly the participation of the government in criminal activities.

The struggle to make human rights reality for the most vulnerable sectors of the Mexican population is not so different today from that which the Jesuits faced when they founded Center Prodh. We cannot point to any true democratic transition or consolidation of the rule of law when 43 families await news, truth, and justice following the enforced disappearance of their sons due to the collusion between authorities and organized crime, or when the government has yet to explain why soldiers chose to attack and extrajudicially execute nearly 20 civilians in Tlatlaya in Mexico State. In light of a panorama of violations that goes far beyond these two internationally known cases, the task facing human rights defenders is to accompany victims with professional actions and tools that not only advance justice in individual cases, but that expose and weaken the structural causes of these abuses, with the aim of transforming our reality.

Along its journey, Center Prodh has been home to dozens of defenders who have helped to shape our institution; and Center Prodh has shaped them as well. The defenders who have formed part of our organization maintain a common vision, based on the conviction that our work, as our ex-Director David Fernández once said, is not simply an option that we logically choose, but an instinctive and heartfelt reaction as we come face to face with the individuals and communities who seek us out.

Our task places us at a crossroads, at the intersection of denouncing and condemning abuses on the one hand, and trying to design policies to respond to them on the other. But in the end, our work has shown us that we cannot depend on any political party or banner to transform our reality, but only on the people who allow us to accompany them in their struggle for dignity and justice.

MARIO PATRÓN SÁNCHEZ,
DIRECTOR, CENTER PRODH



CED hearing, February 2015.
Photo: Centro Prodh.

Recommendations from the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture: crucial to ending impunity in Mexico

Widespread disappearances in a large part of Mexican territory, virtually no convictions for enforced disappearance, and countless obstacles in the search for disappeared loved ones –these are all part of the tragic picture that emerges from the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance's conclusions and recommendations on the situation in Mexico, following its first periodic evaluation of the country. The evaluation culminated in Geneva in February 2015 with the participation of the Committee of experts, representatives of the Mexican government and civil society, and four parents of victims of enforced disappearance from the states of Chihuahua, Guerrero, and Coahuila.

THE COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS, PUBLISHED February 13th, highlight the impunity that prevails both for disappearances of past decades and for those committed today, echoing a central point of concern for civil society organizations. The Committee also documented a series of obstacles faced by family members. For instance, investigative authorities do not initiate immediate investigations upon receiving criminal complaints of enforced disappearance, or they classify the facts as a lesser crime. The Committee urged Mexico to prioritize the immediate search for disappeared people, to create a Special Unit to investigate disappearances (given that the current Special Search Unit is insufficient), and to ensure that both mate-

rial authors and those higher in the chain of command are held responsible for these grave crimes. In this context, the Committee qualified the disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, as a case that illustrates the serious difficulties faced by Mexico in the prevention, investigation, and punishment of enforced disappearances, and in the search for the victims.

The Mexican government, through the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior, sought to disqualify the Committee's conclusions, stating that the recommendations were not useful and did not reflect the government's efforts in this area. However, human rights organizations hail the recommendations as a crucial blueprint for advancing

in the fight against enforced disappearances. We call on Mexican authorities to implement these recommendations, as well as to recognize the UN Committee's jurisdiction to receive and analyze individual cases of enforced disappearance in Mexico.

More recently, in March 2015, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Professor Juan Méndez, presented his country report on Mexico to the UN Human Rights Council, documenting the widespread use of torture at all levels of government and issuing a series of recommendations aimed at ending this practice. These include the need to separate forensic services from attorney generals' offices so as to make them independent, and guarantee that all victims of torture have access to an independent medical and psychological examination following the guidelines of the Istanbul Protocol. The Rapporteur also emphasized the need to punish all state agents who commit or tolerate torture; withdraw the military from public security tasks; establish an effective register of detainees; and ensure the immediate exclusion by judges of any piece of evidence suspected to have been obtained under torture, and that such evidence can only be admitted at trial if the prosecutor demonstrates –having the burden of proof to do so– that it was obtained legally, without torture or other coercion.

Mother of a disappeared daughter in a conference after the CED hearing, February 2015. Photo: Centro Prodh.



The Rapporteur's conclusions are based on extensive documentation, including interviews, statistics, and analysis of information from both civil society and government. The resulting recommendations are key to addressing torture in Mexico, as they attack the structures that incentivize torture. However, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations reacted by rejecting the Rapporteur's conclusions, insulting him, and suggesting that he would not be allowed to return to Mexico (although the government subsequently reiterated its "standing invitation" to human rights rapporteurs).

Given the enormous size of this problem and recalling both its devastating effects on victims and its role in maintaining Mexico's criminal justice system in a dysfunctional state that foments impunity for crimes, we call on the government to accept and implement the UN Special Rapporteur's recommendations as a matter of utmost urgency, and hope that other international actors join our call. The Mexican government's response to widespread torture should not be to seek to cover up the problem and promote its international image, but to protect its population against the abuses perpetrated by its own security forces.

Mothers of disappeared sons in a conference after the CED hearing, February 2015. Photo: Center Prodh.





43 families sharing the same pain



The international community has been following closely the case of the 43 disappeared students of Ayotzinapa, Guerrero over the past six months. In this issue of Focus, we take the opportunity to present a brief panorama of the Ayotzinapa families' struggle for justice half a year after the still unresolved disappearances.

MOST OF THE FAMILIES OF THE 43 DISAPPEARED students that had been studying at the Teachers' School (Normal Rural) in Ayotzinapa are from the central region of Guerrero state, from areas such as Tixtla, Ayutla, Atoyac, Tlapa, Costa Chica, Costa Grande, and La Montaña Alta, whose contexts, while different, have one clear factor in common: poverty.


The parents of the 43 disappeared students are mainly fieldworkers, depending on the harvest (corn in Tlapa, jamaica in the coastal regions, coffee in Atoyac) to survive. With the disappearance of their children, the families have had to give up the life they had, leaving their crops unattended while they search for their sons. More than six months after the disappearances, they face an increasingly urgent dilemma as they divide their time between their activities in search of truth and justice, and the need

to attend to their houses and crops or find other people willing to take on part of these tasks.

Another group of parents works in the trades of masonry and bakery; others obtain their livelihood in brickworks. The women usually engage in household activities, but many have also left their houses after the events of September 26, 2014.

The same pain unites all the families: not knowing where their children are or what happened to them, despite their continuing round-the-clock searches and campaigns for justice.

During the first week of the disappearances, the parents began to come together, and the natural meeting point was the Normal. When they first came to the school, unfamiliar with the campus, their instinct led them to the auditorium in the central courtyard, where they saw people gathered, trying to



share the little they knew and understand what was happening. Their first sources of information were their sons' fellow students, who also knew little.

Six months later and as an organized movement, the families are an important source of the information that drives the national and even international human rights agenda. The parents have constituted a Committee composed of a president, secretary, two treasurers, two representatives to stockpile groceries and two in charge of cooking. The auditorium is the meeting point, where the Committee and the families gather periodically depending on their needs. All activities are consulted with the assembly of parents.

The movement's active participants today are largely parents, but some entire families are present; there are uncles, cousins, and brothers and sisters.

Many of the family members, who are caught in a daily struggle between anguish and hope, express that the strength to keep fighting comes from the understanding and pain among the families: even when different families have different proposals or points of view, "by talking to one another we find the strength to carry on and to stick together." The parents express that they also draw strength from outside groups from Mexico and beyond who support them and call for access to truth, and even those who simply stop by to donate food or otherwise express solidarity: these moments encourage them, because they are received as messages of love.

These 43 families are far from the only ones suffering from enforced disappearance in Guerrero. In fact, at least two families of the 43 have relatives that disappeared during the so-called Dirty War, one from Tixtla and one from Atoyac, and the case of the 43 has brought to light a much wider practice of disappearances in the state. "It's not new this disappearing, for years the government has done this, but today it is in large quantities, that's what makes it different," reflects Ayotzinapa family member Melitón Ortega.

Part of a visual expression of solidarity with Ayotzinapa, 2014. Photo: from the compilation by *Desinformémonos* and Tlachinollan Human Rights Center.



From left to right, petitioners in the hearing: Julio Mata (AFADEM), Martha Camacho (Union of Mothers with Disappeared Children of Sinaloa), Stephanie Brewer (Center Prodh), Alicia de los Ríos (Committee of Mothers of the Political Disappeared of Chihuahua), Abdallán Guzman Cruz and Blanca Hernández (Diego Lucero Foundation). Photo: Daniel Cima.



Inter-American Commission holds hearings on a range of serious human rights issues in Mexico

The last two periods of public sessions of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have included a series of hearings on serious human rights abuses in Mexico, ranging from crimes of the past to violations of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights in the present.



IACHR Commissioner James Cavallaro; on his right IACHR Commissioner Felipe González.
Photo: Daniel Cima.

ON OCTOBER 30, 2014, DURING ITS 153RD ORDINARY sessions, the Commission held five hearings on Mexico, during which it received information from civil society organizations, victims, and government representatives regarding topics including the impact of mega-projects on sustainable development in Mexico, the repression of social protest, Mexico's National Human Rights Program (a hearing requested by the government), and the impunity that persists for the crimes committed by the government during the so-called Dirty War of the 1960s-1980s, during which authorities committed systematic enforced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial executions. In this last hearing, despite the Commissioners' repeated questioning of the government regarding what steps it planned to take to end impunity for these specific crimes and if it would consider re-opening a special prosecutor's office in this area, the government did not answer.

The fifth hearing was dedicated specifically to the topic of "Impunity for grave human rights violations," and focused on the lack of truth and justice for the violations of recent years, following the longstanding impunity for the crimes of the past.

Alluding to Mexico's legacy of impunity, Commissioner James Cavallaro stated, "It is difficult not to see the connection between the impunity for the crimes committed during the so-called Dirty War and what is happening in Mexico today."

The historically unresolved and now deteriorating human rights situation in the country was symbolized throughout the hearings by the case of the 43 disappeared students of Ayotzinapa. The organizations who participated in the hearings dedicated a moment of silence to the students as they held photos of the victims. (In this paradigmatic case, the Inter-American Commission has also named a five-member Independent Expert Group to provide technical assistance in the investigation and to

make structural recommendations aimed at reducing enforced disappearances in the country.)

During its 154th ordinary sessions, the Commission once again granted five thematic hearings on Mexico, which took place on March 20, 2015 and included the topics of the human rights situation in Guerrero state, enforced disappearances, human rights violations caused by Mexico's 2014 energy sector reform, sexual torture of women, and access to justice for migrants.

Although the hearings have covered diverse populations and types of human rights abuses, the common denominator in all of them is that Mexico is living an unprecedented crisis of grave violations, corruption, and impunity. While the government seeks to present a positive image of the country to attract international investment, the facts cannot be hidden: over 25,000 disappeared and missing people (according to official statistics that do not include many cases documented by human rights organizations); over 100,000 people killed in the past few years due to the government's destructive security policies and in a context of collusion between authorities and criminal groups; the systematic use of arbitrary detentions, torture, and the destruction of entire communities in order to construct mega-projects or extract natural resources, largely to be marketed by transnational companies.

In this context and given the lack of access to justice in Mexico, international actors have an increasingly important role to play. We call on international bodies, organizations, and institutions to join in a global effort against structural human rights violations in Mexico and to continue to work with and support the victims and defenders who put themselves at risk day to day in their struggle to transform the human rights situation in the country.

You can view the hearings in the Inter-American Commission at www.cidh.org in the "Sessions and Hearings" section.



Decades of enforced disappearance, impunity and complicity

The disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students is, undoubtedly, one of the most high-profile examples in the history of crimes committed by the Mexican State against its population. Enforced disappearance in particular, used in our country for over 40 years, is one of the most painful crimes for the families of the victims because of the uncertainty it provokes regarding the whereabouts of their loved ones, the violent uprooting of the disappeared from their lives, the creation of widespread fear in communities and the lack of access to justice, truth and reparations.

FOR SOCIETY IN GENERAL, THESE CRIMES PROVOKE reactions that cannot be contained. Indignation spreads and finds a multitude of channels through which to express itself. Marches and protests are one sign of this indignation, whether in the streets, in the media, on walls, on the internet, through music and performances, in places of worship, or through legal analysis and strategies.

The events of the Ayotzinapa case have ushered in an important tool through the granting of precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). If the protection of disappeared persons is always one of the most difficult challenges in the human rights field, in this case – in which the government’s ability to respond fell far short of the necessary technical and investigative capacity – the only alternative was for the Commission to name an independent group composed of internationally-recognized human rights experts to provide technical assistance. This assistance includes analysis and recommendations on the search for the disappeared, the criminal investigation (focusing especially on the relationship between government and organized crime), the treatment of victims, and the structural reforms and policies needed to combat the wider phenomenon of enforced disappearance in the country.

We hope the results and recommendations that come out of this technical assistance will influence future cases by preventing similar abuses and increasing the government’s ability to deal with them when they occur. The expert group’s reports will doubtless shed light on important aspects of the triple crisis of violations, corruption, and impunity that exists in Mexico, including but not limited to the phenomenon of enforced disappearance.

Months before the Ayotzinapa case occurred, organizations, collectives and families that work on enforced disappearance joined efforts to position the serious, chronic and systematic situation of this crime before the Committee on Enforced Disappearances of the United Nations (CED). They found that for political, social, migration, gender, or profit-based reasons, many people have been detained by the State and their whereabouts hidden. The population affected directly or indirectly by this crime continues to grow among a myriad of sectors, especially those in a situation of poverty and vulnerability.

Figures from the National Registry of Missing and Disappeared Persons (RNPEP in Spanish) of the Ministry of the Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación) indicate that there are currently over 25,000 people “missing or disappeared:” 18,124 men and 7,169 women in state (not federal) jurisdictions alone. Over



One of the slogans in demonstrations, 2014.
Photo: from the compilation by *Desinformémonos*
and Tlachinollan Human Rights Center.

10,000 of these people have disappeared just in the last two years, during the administration of current President Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI party. These include 345 people who disappeared during January 2015 alone, more than 10 per day. However, human rights organizations have compared their case lists to the national registry data and have found that only a percentage of their cases are included in the national numbers.

While both the former and current administrations are responsible for the disastrous public security policies that have in part led to these staggering numbers of disappearances, as well as extrajudicial executions and torture, these policies are not uniquely Mexican but respond to the international logic of the "War against Drugs" and are the product of international influence and cooperation.

If these militarized security policies are meant to fight crime, they are ineffective and clearly selective in targeting Mexico's most vulnerable populations. While the government criminalizes drug sales and migration of people fleeing violence and poverty, it appears to be blind to systemic corruption in the government itself, and allows the nearly uncontrolled operation of transnational companies in territories rich in natural resources, destroying and displacing Mexican communities to benefit a handful of businesses.

The State seeks to divert attention from its responsibility for crimes and human rights violations by blaming "organized crime" for violence in Mexico. Yet even when the crimes at hand are committed by non-state actors, they are generally possible because of the tolerance of the government, including failure to prevent and investigate these

acts. For example, the State can be responsible for enforced disappearances by act or omission.

In particular, these abuses continue because of impunity, which gives a green light to perpetrators to keep disappearing people. In 2001, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) issued Recommendation 26/2001 in which it studies 532 cases of crimes committed against political and social movements of the past, most of them enforced disappearances. Those cases have not been resolved to date. This impunity for past crimes is the clearest way to ensure that they are repeated.

We have seen that even when the Presidency passed to an "opposition" party (the PAN, from 2000-2012), there was no effective process of transitional justice. Now, with the return of the PRI (the party implicated in the Dirty War), it is natural to think that those calling for justice face even higher obstacles. Yet even states governed by the supposed "leftist" PRD party have high levels of enforced disappearances. That is, this is not a question of which party should be in power, but rather a practice of the State as such that must be addressed at all levels.

To understand and combat enforced disappearances in Mexico today, it is necessary to examine and address both local and national contexts; crimes of the past and the present; the formal State and the organized criminal structure that exists both within and beyond it. Amid these intersecting structures, our guiding principle must be to listen to the voices of indignation and walk side by side with the families searching for truth and justice, because not one disappearance, much less 43, much less 25,000 can be accepted in a country that wishes to call itself democratic.



Ángel Amílcar following his liberation, October 2014. Photo: Center Prodh.

Ángel Amílcar, now free, begins the fight for truth, justice and reparations

On October 15, 2014, the federal Attorney General's Office (PGR) dropped charges against Ángel Amílcar Colón Quevedo, the Honduran *garífuna* migrant who spent more than five years unjustly imprisoned for crimes he did not commit, and a survivor of torture and racial discrimination at the hands of federal authorities.

IN 2009, AS HE ATTEMPTED TO CROSS MEXICAN TERRITORY, Ángel was brought to a house, threatened, and shut inside by a human smuggler. Police conducted a raid on the house and arbitrarily arrested him. Ángel then spent more than 70 days arbitrarily detained in various places including a military base.

Without respect for his legal rights, without consular assistance, and lacking a proper defense (his public defender witnessed acts of torture and did nothing to interfere), Ángel was eventually sent to a high-security federal prison. During his time there, five of his family members died, including his mother and his oldest son (whose cancer diagnosis had motivated Ángel to migrate in the first place in search of a job that paid enough to afford treatment). Ángel was not permitted to make even a phone call to his family during these difficult times.

Center Prodh took on Ángel's defense for the last three years of his imprisonment, after learning of and documenting his case. Amnesty International declared him a prisoner of conscience in 2014.

Ángel Amílcar calls his liberation a triumph for truth and justice, and a small sample of the injustices being endured by so many other innocent people.

The journey home

On November 10, 2014, Ángel returned to Honduras, accompanied by representatives of Center Prodh and the Center for the Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims, a Honduras-based NGO. Ángel now calls on the authorities to provide reparation for the serious human rights violations he suffered, including the adoption of measures to guarantee that cases such as his no longer occur, and that the police and military officials who tortured him are investigated and held responsible.

The report *Migrants in prison, another tragic fate: false accusations against migrants in Mexico*, published by Center Prodh and the Migration Program of the Iberoamerican University, found that at least 400 Hondurans are currently imprisoned in Mexico. Ángel is just one face of the alarming situation of these migrants, pointing to the need for not only Mexico as a country of transit but also Honduras to take measures to address this problem.



After more than two years of her fight for justice, the Third Unitary Tribunal of the federal judicial branch annulled charges against Claudia Medina Tamariz, survivor of sexual torture at the hands of the Navy. Claudia can now continue her struggle focusing on reparations and the investigation and punishment of her torturers.

ON FEBRUARY 6, 2015, THE MAGISTRATE IN CHARGE of her case resolved that there was no valid evidence to link her to the supposed crime of carrying weapons, following a legal challenge filed by Center Prodh. The judgment not only declares invalid the only piece of evidence against Claudia—the statement made by the naval officers who tortured her—due to its relation to the abuses she was subjected to, but it also recognizes that her captors violated her right to physical integrity.

Amnesty International and Center Prodh hailed this decision as an important precedent in access to justice, but highlighted that this is not sufficient to end impunity in her case, much less in the many thousands of other torture cases in Mexico. Claudia's case is simply one example of the structural patterns of violations by authorities used to fabricate false criminal charges against innocent people.

Claudia is a member of the campaign *Breaking the Silence: All Together Against Sexual Torture* and her case is featured by Amnesty International in its international "Stop Torture" campaign.

Claudia was arbitrarily dragged out of her house in Veracruz in August 2012 along with her husband, Isaías Flores Pineda, by members of the Navy. After being sexually tortured with the aim of forcing her to incriminate herself for supposedly belonging to an organized crime group, she was charged with 12 federal crimes, but only brought to trial for one of them.

The violations committed against Claudia Medina include illegal breaking and entering of her house, illegal arrest, prolonged retention without being brought before the competent authorities, incommunicado detention, physical, psychological, and sexual torture, and exhibition in the media as a member of the "Jalisco New Generation" cartel, among others.



Claudia Medina, found innocent, 2014. Photo: Center Prodh.

**Judicial authorities
acknowledge innocence of
Claudia Medina, survivor
of sexual torture**



BREAKING THE SILENCE

All Together Against Sexual Torture

AS READERS WILL RECALL, CENTER PRODH IS ONE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS ACCOMPANYING THE SURVIVORS of sexual torture who are participating in the nationwide campaign *Breaking the Silence: All Together Against Sexual Torture*. In this edition of Focus, we provide you with updates on the campaign, including three participants who remain unjustly imprisoned based on evidence obtained through sexual torture.



YECENIA ARMENTA GRACIANO

THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (CNDH), issued Recommendation 1/2015 in which it calls on the governor of Sinaloa state, Mario López Valdez, to comply with the recommendations issued by the State Human Rights Commission in the case of Yecenia Armenta Graciano, tortured by members of the Ministerial Police and charged without grounds for the murder of her husband, Jesus Alfredo Cuén Ojeda, brother of the politician Hector Cuén. The Commission had called for reparations and that authorities cooperate in the criminal investigation against the police officers involved in the torture. Yecenia, still in prison, faces a smear campaign in the local press. She now hopes for Mexico's Supreme Court to assume jurisdiction over her case, to review the appeal filed by the state Prosecutor's office against the favorable judicial resolution declaring invalid the evidence obtained under torture.

BELINDA GARZA MELO

WE ARE HAPPY TO SHARE THAT BELINDA GARZA Melo, tortured by members of the federal preventive police, was freed on October 23, 2014, after more than seven years of unjust imprisonment. She was acquitted of charges of organized drug crimes and crimes against health. However, she was sentenced to seven years (time already served) for organized crime through kidnapping, an equally false charge based on the same set of supposed facts. Belinda now fights to clear her name, for reparations, and for punishment for their torturers.

CRISTEL FABIOLA PIÑA JASSO

CRISTEL FABIOLA PIÑA JASSO AND HER HUSBAND were detained in Ciudad Juárez on August 12, 2013. The police beat Cristel and used sexual torture to force her to sign a confession in which she falsely incriminated herself for extortion. Although her father filed a complaint with the State Human Rights Commission and she told the judge that she was a victim of torture, these abuses have not been investigated. Cristel and her husband remain in prison.

VERÓNICA RAZO CAZALES

IN MEXICO CITY, THE DEFENSE OF VERÓNICA RAZO Casales, whose case is accompanied by the NGO Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, filed a motion to end the trial against her for lack of evidence, arguing that the only evidence keeping her in prison was obtained under torture. However, she was denied his freedom.

Silhouette of candles, 2014.

Photo: from the compilation by *Desinformémonos*
and Tlachinollan Human Rights Center.






MIGUEL AGUSTÍN PRO JUÁREZ HUMAN
RIGHTS CENTER
Serapio Rendón 57B, Col. San Rafael,
C.P. 06470, Mexico City, Mexico.

www.centroprodh.org.mx

 www.facebook.com/prodh

 [@CentroProdh](https://twitter.com/CentroProdh)

