

FOCUS



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In This Issue

page

1. Human rights defenders under persecution in Puebla: The case of Martín Barrios

In Mexico the right to defend human rights continues to be threatened by the arbitrary use of the justice system. Martín Barrios' case exemplifies the risk that human rights defenders face in their work and the deceitful use of "justice" to repress those who defend human rights.

1

2. Attacks against human rights defenders in Mexico

The Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre discussed the serious attacks that human rights defenders dealt with during 2005 in its report, "The Right to Defend Human Rights 2005", which highlights the worrying tendency to harass the human rights defenders' work.

4

3. The worsening situation for journalists in Mexico

The situation for journalists in Mexico has worsened significantly recently as they have been the target of further serious attacks. This article exposes serious violations to freedom of expression of different kinds; one possibly committed directly by the organised crime and worsened by the authorities' lack of action and another committed by corrupted public servants.

6

4. Mexican government fails to protect its migrants

A U.S. Border Patrol agent shot Guillermo Martínez Rodríguez, who died on December 31 as a result of the wounds. Mexican government has done little more than issuing statements condemning the event. The government's weak advocacy in support of its migrants is compounded by the hardening of U.S. immigration policy.

8

5. Public security and human rights violations a regional issue

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted a thematic hearing on "Citizen Security and Human Rights" where Centre Prodh expressed its worries on the implementation of hard-line public security measures implemented by the government. The Mexican population's concerns about security have increased and also, our concerns about human rights protection within this context.

9

Mexico in urgent need of structural reforms

The "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" Human Rights Centre published in December its Annual Balance 2005 (available in Spanish on our web page), in which we analysed State policy on human rights issues over the previous year. In the document we concluded that 2005 was another year of good intentions by the government because, although there were important efforts made to tackle deficiencies in the system in order to avoid further human rights violations, most of them failed to achieve the structural reforms needed.

To reach this conclusion we examined issues that we considered important because they were the focus of the current administration's human rights policy at the beginning of its term. These themes included the government's international policy on human rights issues; the militarization of law enforcement forces; the work and failures of the Special Prosecutor's Office to Provide Attention to Events that Probably Constitute Federal Crimes Committed Directly or Indirectly by Public Servants Against Individuals Connected to Social and Political Movements of the Past (FEMOSPP); the work and flaws of the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH); and finally the deficiencies of the National Programme on Human Rights (PNDR).

The situations that we describe in this issue of *Focus* clearly reflect our conclusions in the Annual Balance 2005: the Mexican government has many good

intentions, but it has not taken concrete steps towards implementing the structural reforms recommended by international organisations and, more specifically, by the *Assessment on the Human Rights Situation in Mexico* done by the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights in Mexico. The recommended structural reforms would surely improve the current human rights situation if they were strictly followed.

Perhaps we can characterise the common source of the human rights violations outlined in this issue of *Focus* by the wrongdoings and corrupt acts by Mexican authorities. In the cases discussed, authorities administered justice in ways contrary to the principles of due process or have not done it at all. As a result, those in charge of investigating serious human rights violations have failed to identify and sanction perpetrators, to compensate victims, and to implement measures to avoid similar situations in the future. These failures have resulted in impunity in the attacks against migrants, human rights defenders and journalists, such as Guillermo Martínez Rodríguez, Martín Barrios and Lydia Cacho.

Meanwhile, the presidential candidates for the election this July are focused on other issues that they consider more appealing to the electorate. So far, they have not made commitments to the structural changes needed to improve the current human rights situation.

Human rights defenders under persecution in Puebla: The case of Martín Barrios

In Mexico the right to defend human rights continues to be threatened by the arbitrary use of the justice system. The recent unjust detention of Martín Barrios, member of the Tehuacán Valley Human Rights Commission (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Valle de Tehuacán*, hereafter the Commission), is proof of this.

The presence of Maquilas in the region

In the early 1990s the Tehuacán municipality in the state of Puebla became one of the main centres for the Mexican clothing industry. Approximately 700 *maquilas* (see glossary) were founded in the area, producing large amounts of clothing at low cost for large international

consortiums which, in turn, distribute and advertise the merchandise. International brands have benefited from Tehuacán's skilled workers' labour such as Levi's, Wrangler, Guess, Calvin Klein, Lee and Tommy Hilfiger to name a few (see "*Blue Jeans, Blue Waters and Worker Rights*", Tehuacán Valley Human and Labour Rights Commission and Canadian *Maquila* Solidarity Network, 2003).

The establishment of *maquilas* implied concessions to investors with economic comparative advantages at the cost of precarious working conditions. The situation of labour rights dramatically worsened and the environment was seriously affected, especially because of the water contamination produced by the *maquilas*. In response, the Commission and other civil society organisations got organised to confront the situation. Since 1995, the Commission has accompanied *maquila* employees to their workplace in order to defend their labour rights.

An uncomfortable publication and threats against Martín

In January of 2003, the Commission, along with the Canadian *Maquila* Solidarity Network, published a report entitled "*Blue Jeans, Blue Waters and Worker Rights*". The text documents and analyses the exploitation of workers, together with the economic, social, environmental and cultural impact of *maquilas* on the Tehuacán region. The

publication bothered various businessmen in the area who, in public declarations, accused Commission members of discouraging foreign investment.

Business owners' hostility continued to increase. After the Commission denounced a local *maquila* of unjustifiably firing 25 employees, its director, Martín Amaru Barrios Hernández, was violently assaulted on December 30, 2003. The attacker threatened to harm Martín further if he did not stop his activism. Although official complaints were made to the local Prosecutor's Office (*Ministerio Público*), nobody was held responsible for the attack.

Although Martín continued to receive threats throughout 2004, he continued working in support of human rights. That year Martín was granted the Tata Vasco award on behalf of the Commission. This annual award honours human rights defenders and is given by academic institutions belonging to a prestigious, private university system.

Recently the hostility against the Commission as a whole, and against Martín Barrios in particular, reached a climax. During November of 2005, the Commission documented 163 employees who were unfairly fired by a local *maquila*. In response, the workers organised a peaceful march that began near the local labour courts and ended in front of the *maquila* owner's house. Days later this businessman told the media that these acts scared away investors and that

workers would be better off not organising themselves to demand better working conditions because they would lose regardless.

Martín Barrios arbitrarily detained

A month later, on December 29, 2005, Martín Barrios was detained in Tehuacán and later incarcerated in the Puebla city jail. It was then that Martín was first notified that he was being charged with blackmailing a businessman in Tehuacán. Martín learned that the *maquila* owner who had fired 163 workers from his factory had accused Martín of blackmail on November 24, and had filed his complaint in Puebla. The businessman alleged that on November 22 and 23, Martín had blackmailed him, demanding 150,000 pesos (equivalent to \$15,000 US dollars). In exchange, Martín allegedly would convince the fired *maquila* protestors to stop demanding better working conditions.

From that moment, the circumstances suggested that Martín's detainment, far from serving justice, was actually threatening his ability to protect human rights. This because in the days following Martín's incarceration, it became clear that the accusations against him were not only false but also weak, because they were based on insufficient evidence: the owner's word backed by his brother-in-law and son-in-law. Dozens of workers,



PHOTO: Centre Prodh archive/ T.G.
Martín Barrios at a press conference accompanied by members of the Red TDT, Centre Prodh, AI-Mexico and the *Comisión* the following day after his release.

however, testified in defence of Martín. Also there is video taken by the Commission which shows Martín and other members of the organisation working on a project with the *maquila* workers in an area near Tehuacán, on the very days he allegedly blackmailed the owner.

In spite of all of the above, the judge overseeing the case concluded that there was enough evidence to hold Martín for trial. Because he was being charged with a crime considered serious under Puebla law, Martín was not eligible for release on bail.

The “All Rights for All” National Network of Human Rights Civil Organisations (*Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos “Todos los derechos para todas y todos”*, Red TDT), of which Centre Prodh is part, criticised the judge’s decision. It stated that according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Martín’s detainment could be classified as “arbitrary,” because although it may appear to be legal, it may be a consequence of an unauthorised use of state power (Ref. IACHR, Lizarde Cabrera case c. R. Dominicana par. 68 and Red TDT, press release, January 2006).

The public’s disapproval of the situation and its solidarity with Martín only increased with the judge’s decision to put him on trial. Human rights and labour organisations, including Centre Prodh, demanded that Martín be released immediately. At the international level, Amnesty International declared that were Martín to remain in prison he would be considered a prisoner of conscience, someone imprisoned only for the peaceful expression of his or her beliefs (Urgent Action: AMR 41/004/2006).

Martín Barrios is just one example of a person being detained arbitrarily and targeted in the state of Puebla. Recently it has emerged that the governor of Puebla has conspired with various members of the judiciary branch and the local prosecutor’s office to falsely accuse Lydia Cacho of defamation (see article in this issue of *Focus*). It could easily be said that in Martín Barrios’ case, the Puebla state justice system has sought to impede his human rights activism on a personal level as well as the Tehuacán Valley Human Rights Commission as a whole.

With the international pressure and overwhelming proof in Martín’s favour, the Puebla state government found itself

in a problem, which it attempted to remedy by negotiating with Martín, though he has refused. Meanwhile, Centre Prodh requested from that the IACHR grant precautionary measures to protect Martín, because of fear for his physical safety upon detention.

In face of the situation, Puebla authorities urged the *maquila* owner to forgive Martín via a legal process known as “forgiveness by the victim”. This unilateral legal procedure allows for the victim to “forgive” the person held responsible for a crime, thus avoiding a trial. This procedure is applicable in the case of crimes such as blackmail, which are only investigated upon request by the plaintiff. Shortly before being released on January 12, Martín received a phone call from the State Secretary in Puebla in which he said that Martín would be freed thanks to the measures taken by the local government. After fifteen days in prison, Martín was released from prison just as arbitrarily as he had been detained (*Statement made by Martín in a press conference the day of his release*).

The speed and means with which Martín was released confirm what the human rights organisations had known from the very beginning: Martín’s imprisonment was politically motivated and was tied to the local Tehuacán business owner’s interests in conjunction with the local authorities. Also, Martín’s release shows just how important international solidarity is for cases such as this.

One more case of impunity

In spite of Martín Barrios’ release from prison, justice was not fully served, as

his human rights were violated in regards to his personal freedom and right to due process. The legal mechanism of “forgiveness by the victim” implied that the case’s facts will never be clarified, that those responsible for what happened will not be put on trial, and that reparation will not be made, much less measures taken to prevent the same incident from reoccurring. Due to this, Centre Prodh has expressed its concern regarding the conditions in which Puebla human rights defenders carry out their work. It is worth mentioning that Martín Barrios is not the only human rights defender under attack in Puebla. As mentioned earlier, Lydia Cacho, was accused also by a *maquila* owner who accused her of public defamation; later she was irregularly processed in court (see article in this issue of *Focus*). Due to the circumstances surrounding Martín Barrios and Lydia Cacho’s cases, we have insisted that Puebla government officials guarantee human rights defenders the ability to carry out their work without fear of interference or retaliation (*Statement regarding United Nations Human Rights Defenders*).

Furthermore, we are still worried for the physical and legal safety of Martín Barrios, his family and other members of the Tehuacán Valley Human Rights Commission. This concern is based on the series of threats Martín has received since being freed, in particular the information he received regarding a hit man hired to assassinate him. Centro Prodh sent an updated application to the IACHR again requesting that precautionary measures be taken to protect his life. These measures were granted on February 21, 2006.



PHOTO: Centre Prodh archive/ T.G.
Lydia Cacho and Martín Barrios at a press conference denouncing the corrupted practices by authorities in Puebla

Conclusions

Martín Barrios' case exemplifies the risk that human rights defenders face in their work, especially those who focus on economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

The deceitful use of "justice" to repress those who defend human rights, thus

attempting to stop labour exploitation, remains a threat for activists working in Mexico. The false use of "justice" clearly shows the serious faults inherent in the Mexican justice system, allowing the political and economic interests of a small number of powerful individuals to manipulate legal tools in order to violate the liberties of human rights defenders.

The article "Blue Jeans, Blue Waters and Worker Rights," can be referenced at: www.maquilasolidarity.org

Attacks against human rights

defenders in Mexico

The case of aggression against Martín Barrios discussed in the previous article is representative of the constant abuse that human rights defenders confront in Mexico. In its report, "The Right to Defend Human Rights 2005" released in December 2005, the "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" Human Rights Centre (Centre Prodh) discussed the serious attacks that human rights defenders dealt with in 2005, as reported by victims, organisations that support them and/or press reports. These attacks confirm to us that the Mexican State has not guaranteed the right to defend human rights, nor has it shown advances toward complying with its commitments in the "Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms," issued by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998.

The monitoring done by Centre Prodh revealed that the current Vicente Fox administration continues to commit aggressive acts against human rights defenders. Governmental agents have obstructed defenders' work by using tactics such as harassment, burglary of offices, death threats, homicides, fabricated crimes, surveillance, violently stopping demonstrations, arbitrary detentions, cyber-robbery of organisations' fiscal assets and arbitrary cancellation of bank accounts. All of this was accompanied by a discourse intended to discredit human rights organisations and defenders.

In addition, we have registered in various cases the non-compliance by the Mexican government to follow orders mandated by the Inter-American Commission of Human

Rights (IACHR). This disregard places human rights defenders in a more vulnerable position and puts into question the effectiveness of the institutions of the inter-American human rights protection system.

Defenders in danger in the states of Oaxaca, Chiapas, D.F. and Guerrero

Out of a total of 62 direct or indirect acts against human rights defenders, their families, belongings or fiscal assets, the areas with the highest incidence of attacks are Oaxaca with 14, Chiapas with 13, Mexico City with nine and Guerrero with seven.

Of the 14 attacks against human rights defenders in Oaxaca, we have registered seven detentions of human rights defenders, five of which were done through the reactivation of old arrest warrants, while two were arbitrary detentions. In addition, we noted the local government's refusal to comply with the precautionary measures ordered by the IACHR to protect Raúl Gática, member of the *Junta Organizadora del Consejo Indígena Popular Oaxaqueño "Ricardo Flores Magón" (CIPO-RFM)*. Among the attacks that we consider important to mention are the unlawful break in and burglary of the human rights organisation "*Tequio Jurídico*"; the violent clearing of a peaceful demonstration by students protesting through blocking a federal highway; and the defamation of a group of human rights organisations and defenders, such as the Democracy Collective (*Colectivo por la Democracia CIPO-RFM*), and the Oaxacan Human Rights Network (*Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos*).

The 13 events registered in Chiapas demonstrate a growth in various types of attacks against persons and collectives that defend human rights of indigenous people, as well as the rights to health, free press and access to justice. These assaults include homicides, threats and peremptory detentions. At the same time, new and sophisticated methods of aggression and harassment have seriously hindered the work of human rights defenders. For example, the case of funds electronically stolen from the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Centre, which coincided with the presentation before the IACHR of a case implicating former President Ernesto Zedillo for crimes against humanity.

In particular we would like to draw attention to the case of Gustavo Jiménez Pérez, member of the Civic-Chiapas Alliance (*Alianza Cívica-Chiapas*), a collective that promotes citizen democratisation. He suffered two attacks on November 20 and 22, 2005, that put his life at risk. The investigation of the case has not given the expected results and those responsible for the attacks have still to be held accountable for their actions.

With regard to the situation in the state of Guerrero, important attacks worth mentioning include those against farmer-ecologists from the mountains of Guerrero, Felipe Arreaga and Albertano Peñaloza, members of the Organisation of Farmer Ecologists of the Mountains of Petatlán and Coyuca de Catalán (*Organización de los Campesinos Ecologistas de la Sierra de Petatlán y Coyuca de Catalán, OCESP*). It is necessary to mention the serious incident in which two of Albertano

Peñaloza's sons lost their lives when they were ambushed and a shootout began, possibly led by people tied to groups with political and economic interests in the region (See *Focus* Spring and Autumn 2005). In a similar case, there were two more homicides and serious injuries caused by opposition groups and those supporting the implementation of the hydroelectric project "La Parota" (see article in *Focus* Autumn 2005 and News Brief in this issue).

Other states with registered events

Other states that registered numerous attacks against human rights defenders were: Jalisco, the State of México, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Quintana Roo, and Veracruz. The states of Coahuila, Puebla, Querétaro, Chihuahua, San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas report one case per state of this nature. In total, there were 21 cases during the year.

We can identify ten cases in which the aggression against activists and defenders clearly indicate political repression of their human rights work. We registered three homicides of defenders or their family members. One such homicide took place against Octavio Acuña, who campaigned for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered rights in the state of Querétaro, when he was stabbed to death while working in a condom store where he provided sexual advice. Octavio had previously received and reported death threats. Apart from this, it is also important to mention the deaths of social worker Edith Sosa and her daughter in the state of Veracruz. During 2005, Edith Sosa lead 26 indigenous communities looking to separate from a local municipality founded two years ago.

Further cases to be mentioned include the illegal detention of Patricia Barragán, member of the "Coordinadora 28 de Mayo" in Jalisco; threats and harassment against Lydia Cacho, a women's rights defender and journalist in Quintana Roo (see following article); intimidation against activists from the Zapatista National Liberation Front (*Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*) in the State of México; robbing and beatings suffered by Martín Faz, journalist and activist in San Luis Potosí working against the construction of the "San Xavier" mine; and the telephone surveillance used against Nelly Herrera, director of the Civic

Alliance (*Alianza Cívica*), and the human rights defender bishop Raúl Vera.

We consider it relevant to mention the criminalisation of farmers and other agriculture workers who oppose the high electricity prices, which was considered a breach to the National Farming Agreement (*Acuerdo Nacional para el Campo*), a pact signed in April 2003 by both the Executive Branch of the Mexican government and farming and producing organisations. The same type of criminalisation happened to environmental activists Araceli Domínguez (see *Focus* Spring 2005) and Margarita Tlapa. We observed the same authoritarian actions when authorities from the state of Hidalgo state repressed students from rural farming communities that were mobilising to defend their education rights at the *Normal Rural de El Mexe*, a pedagogy school that trains teachers from provincial areas. Furthermore, six ecologists defending a community park in the State of México were detained. Lastly, there were three cases in which neighbours and community members were violently repressed while protesting to show their inconformity with governmental politics, two cases in the State of México and another in Jalisco.

Aggressors

The aggressors in the majority of these instances have been governmental agents, which, at both the federal and local level, have directly and unquestionably attacked human rights defenders. The state and federal authorities from the public safety and justice departments have had an active role in these attacks by way of detainments, evacuations, blockades, harassment and likely thefts. In addition, the state and federal government confront defenders' work and ignore recommendations by the regional and universal protection systems. The assailants have also been individuals working on behalf of local or federal criminal investigation agencies, the military and informal groups of power linked to the government.

Nevertheless, although the direct attackers in many of the cases mentioned above could have been identified because of their work attributions as public servants, in 24 cases the corresponding authorities have not taken the necessary actions yet to do so. The competent authorities by not investigating and sanctioning these abuses

have committed serious omissions that should be considered as faults to the laws that regulate the public servants responsibilities. These failures result in cases of violations committed against human rights defenders that continue to be unpunished.

Conclusions

It is of vital importance that the Mexican authorities put an end to the continuous assailment against human rights defenders, that they be investigated and those guilty be held responsible. Additionally, it is crucial that all public servants and employees at all levels be trained to recognise and facilitate the human rights defenders' work.

Just as Centre Prodh indicated along with the other organisations from the "All Rights for All" National Human Rights Network (*Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos Todos los Derechos para Todas y Todos*, Red TDT) in the report made on application of the "Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms", report that was presented to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for human rights defenders in 2005, other aspects that the Mexican government should strengthen in order to fulfil its commitments are:

1. To create an environment that favours the defence of human rights via campaigns to spread the importance of human rights defenders' work.
2. To improve the current legal framework to include an agency which, in concordance with the Declaration on Defenders, would specifically be accountable for implementing the necessary measures to protect defenders from any means of aggression or persecution.
3. To reform the Public System for the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman system) so that the system is independent from authorities and political parties.
4. To educate and train judges about the international human rights tools and their obligation to adhere to them.

The worsening situation for journalists in Mexico

Since 2005 the situation for journalists in Mexico has worsened significantly as they have been the target of further serious attacks. Also there was a false accusation made against Lydia Cacho, journalist and women's human rights defenders which involved Puebla's Executive and Judicial branches (as in the case of Martín Barrios-see above).

Last year the *Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre* (Centre Prodh) reported on the attacks faced by journalists in Mexico during the present administration, which included homicides, kidnappings, disappearances, threats and physical aggressions (see *Focus Spring* and newsbrief Summer 2005). Most of these attacks were carried out against journalists investigating drug-trafficking and corruption of governmental officials. We also reported on the situation faced by *Noticias* newspaper in Oaxaca where workers were prevented from carrying out their informative work allegedly due to political conflicts they had with the current governor.

All together, the aggressions committed against journalists in 2005 positioned Mexico early this year as the most dangerous country to practice journalism in the world, second only to Iraq (New York Times, February 10, 2006). Not even in Colombia, a nation with serious drug-trafficking problems and armed guerrilla issues, have there been as many reports of violent attacks against journalists. In October 2005 the organisation *Journalists Without Borders* had already reported that Mexico, along with Cuba and Colombia, was one of the Latin American countries where journalism faced the harshest conditions (*La Jornada*, October 20, 2005).

Brutal violence against journalism: *El Mañana* under fire

These concerns issued by international organisations regarding the troublesome situation of the violations of the right to freedom of expression were made before the situation worsened at the beginning of February 2006. We affirm this, due to the violent attacks committed recently against journalists, working especially near

the US-Mexico border, although not exclusively.

In relation to this, the representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico, Amerigo Incalcaterra, expressed his concern for the reiterative attacks that have occurred against journalists in the last few months. He announced that his office had documented 12 attempts against media workers from November 2005 to February 2006. Two people were killed, four attacked and six threatened (*El Universal*, February 15, 2006).

One of the most recent, worrying cases is the serious attack against the newspaper *El Mañana* which took place in Nuevo Laredo, state of Tamaulipas. On February 6, 2006, a group of gunmen fired at *El Mañana* staff members using high-powered weapons and throwing a grenade inside the facilities and then fled the scene. Fortunately, only one of the journalists was critically injured (New York Times, February 10, 2006). Ironically, this incursion of *El Mañana* happened just 10 days after this newspaper had participated in the international seminar organised by the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) "Drug-trafficking, Investigation and News Coverage" (*El Siglo de Torreón, Plaza Pública*, February 8, 2006). The *El Mañana* attack has been widely condemned by national and international human rights organisations, amongst them the Mexican journalists' movement, the IAPA and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) (*El Universal*, February 8, 2006). The IAPA directed a letter to President Fox in which they demanded "...the federal government to directly intervene and take urgent and strong measures to confront the spiral of violence and impunity" (see IAPA Press Release, February 7, 2006).

Founded in 1932, *El Mañana* is the largest newspaper in Nuevo Laredo. Over the years, it has closely researched corrupt practices by local politicians and drug-trafficking in Nuevo Laredo. This city is one of the main border cities from where tons of cocaine are shipped north (New York Times, February 10, 2006). It is believed that due to their research work,

its board and staff members have been the target of threats and serious attacks since the 1990s. For example, the then chief editor was killed in 2004 outside his home. There was a police investigation carried out with various irregularities, which ended up blaming a US citizen for this homicide within a context of serious violations of due process (*El Siglo de Torreón, Plaza Pública*, February 8, 2006).

Taking all of this into account, it is not surprising that the director of *El Mañana*, after the most recent attack against their facilities, publicly declared that they will self-censor their investigative work even further because it was obvious the authorities could not combat the organised crime. He said that what he was more concerned about was the health of the injured journalist and other staff members.

After the latest attack against *El Mañana* the Federal Attorney General's Office (*Procuraduría General de la República, PGR*) declared that it would investigate this incident together with 10 other cases of attacks against journalists, most killed presumably by drug-dealers. Last October, members of the Federal Lower Chamber formed a commission for the follow up of these cases. This commission established that the current administration has registered the highest number of attacks against journalists in comparison to the two previous administrations [Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000)]. To date there is no official news regarding the investigations of these crimes (*La Jornada*, February 8, 2006).

Lydia Cacho: victim of a perverted justice system

Lydia Cacho, women's human rights defender and journalist, has been the victim of what today has been uncovered as a serious governmental plot to falsely blame her for one of her publications that exposed a paedophilia network. Powerful and influential businessmen in Mexico were allegedly involved in this network.

Lydia is the director of the Integral Centre for Women's Attention (*Centro Integral de Atención a la Mujer, CIAM*), a centre

that provides support to women victims of sexual violence in Quintana Roo. During the course of her work she learned about various cases of paedophilia victims that were linked to a criminal network. Based on the testimonies of these victims, in 2004 she published a book entitled “Demons of Eden” (*Los Demonios de Eden*) as to publicly denounce the commission of these crimes; she also filed a formal complaint before the authorities. In this book she documented the believed involvement in this paedophilia network of a powerful Lebanese businessman residing in Mexico, Jean Succar Kuri, a person who is currently under arrest in the US for these crimes. Also in her book, Lydia mentioned the involvement of various public servants, politicians, drug-dealers and powerful businessmen. Among the latter she explained that a Lebanese businessman resident of Puebla, José Kamel Nacif, protected Succar Kuri in the commission of these crimes. (Journalist without Borders, January, 23, 2006).

As a result, the businessman José Kamel Nacif accused her of slander and defamation. On the basis of this accusation, Lydia was arrested in Cancun, Quintana Roo, on December 16, 2005, and brought to Puebla. During the trip the officers who arrested Lydia tortured her psychologically, telling her that she would be raped and beaten once in prison claiming that everything was fixed so she would suffer a rough treatment. Lydia’s detention caused an immediate outrage as her case was publicised in the media. Once in Puebla, she escaped rape when a female senator intervened in her favour and Lydia was sent to the prison’s infirmary to be treated for health problems. Some guards confirmed to Lydia while detained that Kamel Nacif had previously made all the arrangements so that she would be tortured and mistreated while in prison but these guards offered to protect her (CNN en Español-TV interview by Lydia Cacho). Lydia was freed 30 hours later since she could apply for a bail because she was accused only for defamation.

Revealing telephone conversations

Lydia requested before the court to have her case transferred to the jurisdictional courts in the state of Quintana Roo,

because she believed that the judicial system in the state of Puebla was biased due to the powerful political influence of the alleged victim, Jean Kamel Nacif – known as the “Jeans King” since he owns several *maquiladoras* (see glossary) in the area. She was granted this petition on January 20, 2006.

On February 13, weeks after this resolution to transfer her case to Quintana Roo, the media received an anonymous tape with a series of recordings that contained nearly a dozen conversations between Kamel Nacif and different public servants and journalists in the states of Puebla and Chiapas. The recordings made it clear that Kamel Nacif had planned to take revenge against Lydia Cacho with the help of several public servants, including the governors for Puebla and Chiapas, the Puebla state Attorney General and the judge that oversaw Lydia’s case.

The media publicity of these conversations has generated a vast outrage in the Mexican society. As a result, a political initiative in Congress to impeach Puebla’s governor for his corrupt alleged practices was initiated. Apart from this, the human rights organisations part of the “All Rights for All” National Human Rights Network (*Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de*

Derechos Humanos Todos los Derechos para Todas y Todos, Red TDT) in which Centre Prodh participates, expressed their outrage because of the serious irregularities linked to the false accusation against Lydia and the recordings. To begin with, we maintain that recording private conversations is a crime and therefore there should be a thorough investigation to find and sanction those responsible for them.

Additionally, the *Red TDT* affirmed that Lydia Cacho’s detention was arbitrary because according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) the term “arbitrary” is synonymous of irregular, abusive and contrary to due process (Red TDT, press release 2/2006, February 15, 2006). This on the bases of what is known from these recordings that the governor, the public prosecutor and the Puebla state judge were corrupted since they backed the businessman’s petitions to carry out his revenge. Their actions were aimed at simulating a legal process against Lydia in order to falsely accuse her. Therefore Lydia was a victim of human rights violations by the Puebla Executive and Judicial branches. This is interpreted as a serious attempt to inhibit her right to freedom of expression (*idem*).



PHOTO: Centre Prodh Archive / T.G.
David Velasco (Centre Prodh) and Lydia Cacho during a discussion on the issue by the document “Blue Jeans, Blue Water and Labor Rights”

The creation of a new *Fiscalía*

Before the *El Mañana* and Lydia Cacho incidents took place, President Fox held a meeting with the CPJ last September in which he said he would ask the Attorney General to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate crimes violating the right to freedom of expression. At the beginning of 2006 the CPJ urged Mr. Fox's government again to name this special prosecutor which did not happen until February 15 when the PGR announced it had agreed to create the new Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Committed Against Journalists (*Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos cometidos contra Periodistas*) (*El Universal*, February 15, 2006). This office has authority to direct, coordinate and supervise the investigations and, if applicable, to prosecute crimes committed in Mexico against national or international journalists as a result of their professional work. Ironically, the office will not take on any case related to incidents linked to

organised crime (*Cosmovisión*, February 15, 2006). This is a major difficulty considering that most attacks suffered by journalists during this recent wave of violence have been linked directly to their investigations on drug-trafficking. The new Special Prosecutor announced on February 23 that he will investigate the crimes committed against Lydia Cacho.

Conclusions

Here we have exposed different kinds of violations to the right of freedom of expression; one possibly committed directly by the organised crime and worsened by the authorities' lack of action and another committed by corrupted public servants.

Despite the creation of the *Fiscalía*, we have little hope that it will be successful at finding those responsible for the attacks against journalists. This statement is based on the experience of other special prosecutor offices created by the Executive branch, at both at Federal and local levels, that have

yet to come up with positive results, such as those Special Prosecutor Offices investigating the Ciudad Juárez murders (see *Focus* Winter 2005), or investigating the crimes committed in the

dirty war period (FEMOSPP see past articles of *Focus*), for example. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that the Special Prosecutor's office will not have the authority to investigate aggressions against journalist linked to drug-trafficking issues. Thus, it is difficult to believe that the creation of a new special prosecutor office will deliver the expected results.

The Mexican government must take further steps to strengthen the justice system so that the multiple vulnerabilities in the system are not exposed to political and economic interest, influential individuals or organised crime, so that violations against journalists and other victims are punished, the victims receive reparation, and that measures to avoid further human rights violations are implemented.

Mexican government fails

to protect its *migrants*

On December 30, 2005, a U.S. Border Patrol agent shot Guillermo Martínez Rodríguez, a Mexican from Guadalajara crossing into U.S. territory near San Diego, California. After being wounded in the back, Mr. Martínez returned to Mexico and was treated at the Red Cross in Tijuana, where he died on December 31. He left a widow and two small children.

The Mexican government expressed its concerns about the allegedly inappropriate use of force to the U.S. Border Patrol, the San Diego Police Department, the Inspector General of the U.S. Justice Department, and the San Diego office of the U.S. Attorney General's office. Later, the Mexican Embassy in the U.S. sent a diplomatic letter to the U.S. State Department asking it to clarify the facts of the case and to investigate (*Seguimiento del Caso de Guillermo Martínez Rodríguez*, Foreign Relations Secretariat of Mexico, January 6, 2006).

Nevertheless, the Mexican government has done little more than issue statements condemning the event. The Mexican government has vowed to work in coordination with Mr. Martínez's family to take whatever legal action is necessary, whether it be civil or criminal, to ensure justice is imposed.

The Mexican public and press have been outraged by both Mr. Martínez's death and the Mexican government's weak response. Observers have called for a complete investigation of the shooting and criminal proceedings if appropriate. Mexican political parties have called their government's response "timid," "tepid" and "hesitant," and have encouraged the government to make a "dignified" and "patriotic" stand (*Es Más*, 3 January 2006; press release by the Democratic Revolutionary Party, *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, 28 January 2006). The Mexican government's weak reaction in response to the events is part of a longer pattern of not advocating effectively on behalf of its citizens.

In the face of U.S. immigration policy

The Mexican government's weak advocacy in support of its migrants is compounded by the hardening of U.S. immigration policy. One example is the U.S. House of Representatives' "Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" (H.R. 4437), passed on December 16, 2005, by a vote of 239 to 182. The legislation equates immigrants with criminals and threatens the fundamental rights of migrants and their

families. One of the most controversial sections of the bill makes undocumented immigration a crime, thus characterising as criminals approximately 11 million people now living in the United States (currently undocumented immigration is considered a civil violation). Furthermore, the bill imposes a mandatory minimum sentence on migrants who re-enter the U.S. after having been removed. Worryingly, the bill makes it a crime to assist undocumented immigrants, which would apply to church groups, community organisations and others that offer humanitarian assistance. In addition, the bill orders the construction of physical infrastructure, such as walls, stretching along the border separating the U.S. from Mexico.

In a letter to lawmakers opposing H.R. 4437, Human Rights Watch notes that the bill mandates detention for undocumented immigrants; limits migrants' rights to appeal deportation orders; allows the indefinite detention of non-citizens who cannot be deported; and expands the categories and types of crimes for which an immigrant can be deported to include low-level offences for which deportation is an excessive and unnecessary sanction (Human Rights Watch, December 7, 2005).

Although some analysts predict the House bill will not be passed in its current form by the Senate, it does signal the atmosphere surrounding immigration policy in Congress and among governors.

Weak response by the Mexican government

H.R. 4437 has spurred outrage and ridicule among average Mexicans. The proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, in particular, offends Mexicans, who call it inappropriate and predict it will be ineffective. Many analysts fear that the wall would drive migrants to more dangerous border crossings. Many Mexican migrants die crossing between Arizona and the Mexican state of Sonora, pushed to the deserts because of existing walls in more urbanised areas of California and Texas. Mexico's National Human Rights Commission, a government agency, has compared the proposed barriers to the Berlin Wall, noting more than 3,500 Mexicans have died attempting to enter the United States (*La Jornada*, 17 December 2005). In 2005, at least 433 Mexicans – including Guillermo Martínez Rodríguez – died trying to cross into the U.S.; in two of those deaths U.S. Border Patrol agents allegedly were involved directly (*La Jornada*, 22 December 2005; *The Economist*, 12 January 2006).

The Mexican government's reaction to the U.S. legislation has been predictably weak. In order to protest the proposed construction of the wall, the Mexican legislature sent letters to legislatures in Latin America, Spain and Portugal calling for solidarity and worldwide condemnation of H.R. 4437 in order to prevent the construction of the wall at the border (*La Jornada*, 27 December 2005). Although Mexican President Vicente Fox called H.R. 4437 "shameful," his government has done little else.

The Mexican government's long-term failure to negotiate appropriate immigration policies with the U.S. government compares unfavourably with Mexico's successful lobbying effort to ensure passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993, when Mexico used its consulates to help lobby the U.S. Congress. Another unused channel could include the millions of U.S. residents and citizens of Mexican descent, who are often angered by punitive immigration measures (*The Economist*, 12 January 2006).

Mexico must protect migrants on its side of the border

In addition to advocating for improved immigration policies in the U.S., Mexico must improve its treatment and protection of migrants in its own territory. Ms. Gabriela Rodríguez Pizarro, then the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, noted after an official visit to the U.S.-Mexico border region that migrants in Mexico are in a vulnerable situation, often subject to extortion, ill-treatment and sexual abuse by smugglers, criminal gangs, and Mexican police officers and migration officials. Furthermore, the Mexican government has been accused of mistreating foreign migrants in Mexico, who primarily come from Central America. Some migrants are detained in special detention centres in Mexico, the conditions in which are often poor. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants had manifested fears that further criminalising undocumented immigration will increase migrants' desperation, thus increasing opportunities for abuse (U.N. reports E/CN.4/2003/85/Add.3 and E/CN.4/2003/85/Add.2, 30 October 2002).

Conclusion

Two events – the passage of a strongly anti-immigrant bill by the U.S. House of Representatives and the killing of Mexican migrant Guillermo Martínez Rodríguez just two weeks later – have highlighted the failure of the Mexican government to advocate adequately on behalf of its citizens. Instead it allows others, especially the U.S. government, to determine joint migration-related issues. The Mexican government must take the lead in asking the United States to ensure due process and protection for its citizens abroad at the same time that it works to protect migrants on its own side of the border.



PHOTO: Migramex archive.
Migrant women.

Public security and human rights violations a regional issue

The "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" Human Rights Centre" (Centre Prodh) has worked actively since 2003 to analyse public security policies designed and implemented by the Mexican State. Since that time, we have observed the hardening of those public security policies, both in Mexico and in the rest of Latin America, with grave consequences for the respect for and protection of human rights. In the case of Mexico, the implementation of hard-line public security measures has resulted in serious human rights violations, such as in the case of Nadia Ernestina Zepeda Molina, who was arbitrarily detained, raped by police officers, falsely accused and imprisoned (*Focus*, Summer 2005). We have also monitored worrisome situations related to public security, such as the application of the "Safe Mexico" programme in towns along the U.S.-Mexico border (*Focus*, Spring and Summer 2005).

A sense of insecurity

Recently the Mexican population's concerns about security have increased. The scandal caused by the attack against *El Mañana* newspaper in Nuevo Laredo shocked people (see related article in this issue of *Focus*). Days before this incident, the press reported on a worsening wave of violence in six Mexican states (Durango, Michoacán, Jalisco, Sonora, Tamaulipas and Nuevo León) in which 20 people were executed, possibly by criminal organisations (*La Jornada*, 1 February 2006). On the same day the Federal Preventative Police (*Policía Federal Preventiva*, PFP) added Acapulco, in the state of Guerrero, to the list of places with high levels of violence (*El Universal*, February 1, 2006). The federal Attorney General's Office (*Procuraduría General de la República*, PGR) declared during a press conference that this violence was due to money laundering and drug-trafficking activities (*La Jornada*, February 1, 2006). In addition, the high incidence of kidnappings and murders has been constant. All of these incidents were covered by the media, further increasing the population's sense of insecurity and adding to their mistrust in the State's ability to solve security problems. We fear that the government will attempt to solve this wave of violence by further hardening the security policies, possibly resulting in serious human rights violations.

Citizen's security a regional concern

In order to find a solution for human rights concerns related to security issues, Centre Prodh joined a regional initiative by the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) (Argentina), the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA) and other human rights organisations from Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Peru, the U.S. and Mexico to request a hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on "Citizen Security and Human Rights". The hearing was held on October 14, 2005, in Washington, DC.

At the hearing, we expressed our concerns about those aspects of State security policies that seriously affect the respect for and protection of human rights in the region. We also exposed the type of human rights violations that occur in the climate of violence and insecurity common in Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, we expressed our perspective

on the role that the Inter-American human rights protection system should play in establishing precise limits to States actions, especially regarding the definition of the framework and standards aimed at reforming, improving and developing citizen security institutions and policies that respect human rights. Finally, we presented proposals for the IACHR's work agenda for these issues, including:

- 1) The creation of a thematic report focused on public security and human rights;
- 2) The organisation of thematic hearings with experts in the region's countries;
- 3) The selection of individual cases to use as precedents in establishing standards for use by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; and
- 4) The incorporation of public security and human rights as a topic to be addressed by thematic rapporteurs and country reports.

Centre Prodh's contribution to the hearing was focused on two specific issues: (a) the analysis of the Mexican government's public security policy as seen through the worrisome case of Nadia Zepeda (mentioned above); and (b) the problems brought about by legislative changes to public security and criminal justice policies, and the militarization of security forces, which affects the full exercise of human rights in Mexico (see *Focus*, Autumn 2004).

It is important to remember that, in the case of Mexico, the IACHR expressed in its 1998 Country Report on Mexico, its concern regarding the blurring of professional specialisation between the different police and security forces, the militarization in several states which has led to an increase in complaints of human rights violations, and the use of torture and cruel treatment used by some sectors of the security forces. It recommended, amongst other actions, that the State take the necessary steps to assure that security agents are subject to administrative suspension during the investigation of complaints of alleged violations of the right to life and to restrict "the National Armed Forces to the role for which they were created" (par. 703, 738, IACHR, 1998).

The IACHR's commissioners responded positively to our proposals, and despite the budget limitations facing the IACHR, seemed willing to follow-up on some

aspects of the suggested agenda, particularly concerning the creation of a report (point 1). Days after the hearing, representatives from the participating organisations met with high ranking officers from the Organisation of American States (OAS), among them Steve Montblatt, Acting Director of the Multidimensional Security Department, and Ricardo Domínguez, Chief of Staff to OAS Secretary General Insulza, to inform them of the NGOs' initiative before the IACHR. They seemed interested in making citizen security issues a priority.

Conclusions

The public's sense of insecurity has increased continuously in Mexico, as it has throughout the region. In the face of this, citizens feel that the government's response has been insufficient. The measures taken thus far by the Mexican government do not ensure the respect for and promotion of human rights. We hope that as a follow-up to the hearing, the IACHR will implement the proposals presented by the organisations and will put pressure on countries, particularly Mexico, regarding public security policies that threaten human rights.

Now is the time for the Mexican government to respond to what was presented at the IACHR's hearing and to the IACHR's previous recommendations. It must take the steps necessary to guarantee that its public security policies and the actions of its security forces respect and protect, rather than violate, the human rights of Mexican citizens.

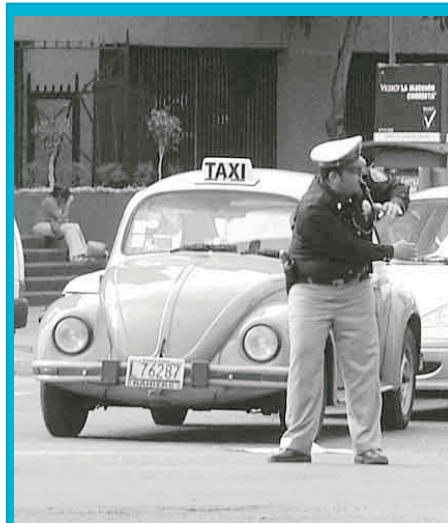


PHOTO: Centre Prodh Archive/ T.G.

 Police officer in Mexico city

Worsening situation in relation to the project *La Parota* hydroelectric dam

In spite of the growing movement to oppose the hydroelectric dam *La Parota* (see *Focus*, Autumn 2006, for more information), employees from the Special Agrarian Prosecutor's Office (*Procuraduría Agraria*), the Federal Electricity Commission (*Comisión Federal de Electricidad*, CFE) and other Guerrero state agencies have continued illegal practices such as "buying" votes, transporting sympathetic villagers from outlying communities to participate in assemblies, and indirectly threatening communities. These actions have increased the internal divisions within affected communities between those who oppose the dam and those who support it.

The most recent community assemblies convened to discuss the dam took place in the communities of *Dos Arroyos* (December 16), and *Los Huajes* and *La Palma* (December 27). It was during these meetings that the expropriation of land was approved, as was a change in zoning or land usage. Throughout these meetings there was an excessive and unjustified police presence. For example, in the Assembly of *Bienes Comunales de Cacahuatpec* there were approximately 500 police officers present.

Moreover, the assemblies were held illegally because, among other things, they were conducted without a quorum as stipulated by agrarian law, which requires at least 75% of the local population to be present in order to hold meetings. Not only did authorities allegedly recognise assemblies with as little as 51% of the population in attendance, but some assembly participants were not from the local communities and did not have the right to vote. In addition, it is important to mention that these groups do not represent the entire population. This is especially important because the assemblies made crucial decisions regarding the loss of the entire plot of land.

In order to confront these irregularities, local community members and legal advisers from the Tlachinollan Mountain Centre for Human Rights (*Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña "Tlachinollan"*) began to contest the assemblies and initially obtained positive results. On January 17, an agrarian court declared that the *Cacahuatpec* assembly held on August 23, 2005, was conducted illegally. As a result, the CFE will not be able to begin the land expropriation process in *Cacahuatpec*, nor carry out any of the other related projects that were planned in the community. The assembly was determined to be illegal because, among other things, only 873 people were found to have signed or put their fingerprints on the resulting document. Yet, the authorities confirmed that 2,875 of 7,200 community members had participated in the assembly; in other words, only 873 of 2,875 participants (30%) endorsed the final document. This represents a serious problem of transparency, supported principally by CFE authorities and the state government.

Of the 19 assemblies convened in the affected zone, 63% of the land that will be flooded corresponds to four communities where the majority of the community members are opposed to the dam and are contesting the assemblies (the communities of *Cacahuatpec*, *Dos Arroyos*, *Los Huajes* and *La Palma*).

Events continue that have increased the climate of violence in the region. For example, two representatives of the communities *Dos Arroyos* and *Los Huajes* were harassed and intimidated. A member of the opposition movement in *Los Huajes* received a bribe offer from a supporter of the project so that he would withdraw from the opposition movement. An opposition leader from *Dos Arroyos* denounced intimidation due to the surveillance by members of the state police. Worse yet was the murder of Eduardo Maya Manrique, a member of the opposition, in the *Dos Arroyos*. Amnesty International declared that it feared the murder would unleash even more violence (see Urgent Action AI 41/008/2006).

This conflict, a product of divisions between those who support and those who oppose the construction of the *La Parota* dam, has changed the communities' character since 2003. If the dam were constructed at least 25,000 people would be displaced. All this would occur amid community discontent because of the lack of transparency in the community decision-making process and the interference by government bodies in this process. It is important that the authorities implement an improved process of legal consultation that guarantees the representation of the communities that will be affected.

President Vicente Fox, FEMOSPP and the Supreme Court of Mexico: Continued failure to end impunity

At the end of February 2006, a draft report prepared by FEMOSPP (the special prosecutor's office charged with investigating crimes during Mexico's "dirty war", 1960s-1980s) was leaked. This report implicates State agents in human rights abuses during the "dirty war" era in Mexico and was based partly on declassified documents from the Mexican military. The report was compiled by 27 researchers hired by FEMOSPP, including historians, former student militants and victims' advocates. The report's authors leaked copies to several prominent Mexican writers and media outlets, reportedly to avoid censorship and to protest not being paid for their work. Ignacio Carrillo Prieto, head of FEMOSPP, issued a strong critique of the leak and minimized the importance of the report, saying that it was a draft version that contained many mistakes and claims that were unsubstantiated.

The draft report details the State policy of arbitrary detention, torture and rape, as well as the execution of hundreds of people and the destruction of entire villages during the "dirty war". The report charges the administration of President Luis Echeverría (1970-6) with implementing a plan of genocide against supposed subversives, particularly in the southern state of Guerrero, where military facilities allegedly were operated like "concentration camps" (report, ch. 6, p. 57). Such an "openly counter-guerrilla strategy could not have been created without the knowledge and explicit approval of the president", the report concludes (report, ch. 6, p. 51). For the first time, the names of military officers allegedly involved in human rights abuses are listed, along with the names of more than 500 people who remain missing.

Despite the importance of its findings, Mr. Fox and Mr. Carrillo have failed to endorse the report. Instead, Mr. Carrillo announced plans to make changes to the document before its release on April 15, claiming it is biased and places too much blame on the military without describing the abuses committed by rebel groups. Furthermore, he plans to delete references to concentration camps and to revise allegations that President Echeverría was directly behind the abuses. Even worse the Attorney General's Office recently announced that after the presentation of this document, the FEMOSPP will officially disappear (*La Jornada*, March 13, 2006).

The report can be found on the Web pages of the Mexican magazine Eme-Equis (<http://www.eme-equis.com.mx>) and the National Security Archive, a non-partisan research group (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/>).

In another step backward for justice, the Mexican Supreme Court (*Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Nación*) has decided not to review files associated with the massacre of students and activists on October 2, 1968, in Mexico City. The court also declined to order the arrest of former President Luis Echeverría, Secretary of the Interior (*Gobernación*) under President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz in 1968 and president during another massacre on June 10, 1971.

The decision of the Supreme Court continues the impunity characteristic of the Mexican State, thus denying justice to victims and their families. The decision has been described as "high-handed, arrogant and, of course, rationally unsustainable" by members of civil society (*La Jornada*, 19 January 2006).

In another blow to justice, in 2005 the Supreme Court declared that statutory limitations are applicable to genocide committed before 2002 in Mexico. It also recognised the military's jurisdiction in investigating violations of human rights committed by the military, disregarding its obligation to obey international commitments.

Despite the historic political transition that took place in Mexico in 2000, human rights abuses remain unpunished, continuing patterns set by earlier administrations. President Fox, FEMOSPP and the Supreme Court have failed in their obligation to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during the "dirty war".

Glossary

CFE, *Comisión Federal de Electricidad*, Federal Commission for Electricity, a governmental body in charge of providing the services of the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity.

FEMOSPP, *Special Prosecutor's Office to Provide Attention to Events that Probably Constitute Federal Crimes Committed Directly or Indirectly by Public Servants Against Individuals Connected to Social and Political Movements of the Past*. A prosecutor's office created and designated to investigate crimes that mostly occurred during the "dirty war" period in Mexico.

Maquila/maquiladora, A plant where assembling and sawing takes places, especially along the US-Mexico border, to which foreign materials and parts are shipped and from. Their finished product is returned to the original market, to be commercialised by large transnational companies.

PAN, *Partido Acción Nacional*, National Action Party, centre-right party of President Fox.

PGR, *Procuraduría General de la República*, Federal Attorney General's Office, has federal jurisdiction for investigating crimes.

PRD, *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, Party of the Democratic Revolution, centre-left opposition party.

PRI, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, *Revolutionary Institutional Party*, which held power for 71 years until defeated in the July 2000 elections; the period of its rule is known as the *priista* government.

PVEM, *Partido Verde Ecologista de México*, Mexican Green Party, a family controlled party that does not necessarily reflect the tendencies of Green Parties in other countries. Currently constructing alliances with the PRI.

PRODH was created in 1988 as an institution dedicated to the promotion and defence of human rights. It has four programs of work: integral defence, educational processes and monitoring and public policy; and three work areas: international relations, communication and organisational development. PRODH has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and it also has the status of Accredited Organisation with the Organisation of American States.

PRODH works with groups throughout Mexico to consolidate human rights protection. Since its founding, it has given effective support and solidarity to groups and persons who have suffered injustice, poverty, and marginalisation.

For further information or to join PRODH's membership, please contact:

Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez
Human Rights Centre

Serapio Rendón 57-B
Col. San Rafael, Mexico DF 06470
Tel: (5255) 5546 8217,
5566 7854, 5535 6892, Fax: ext 108
Email: prodh@centroprodh.org.mx
Web page: <http://www.centroprodh.org.mx>

Director: David Velasco.
Contributors to this issue: Santiago Aguirre, Mélanie Berthaud, Paula del Cioppo, Mireya del Pino, Lilia Moreno, Vanessa Reilly, Irasema Zavaleta.
Editor: Irasema Zavaleta.
Designer: Tania Tamara Gómez.

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Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre, AC

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Serapio Rendón 57-B Colonia San Rafael México, D.F. 06470 México