



The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

April 23, 2013

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of the undersigned human rights organizations, we write to respectfully request that you include a meeting with members of Mexican civil society during your upcoming visit to Mexico in order to consider human rights concerns from a non-governmental perspective.

We believe that such a meeting is of vital importance given the numerous human rights challenges Mexico currently faces. From 2006 to 2012, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, CNDH) registered a five-fold increase in complaints of human rights violations by Mexican soldiers and federal police—including torture, rape, extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, and other abuses. All but a fraction of these cases remain in impunity. In spite of its prohibition in Mexican law, torture continues to be a widespread practice used to obtain confessions. The CNDH reported a 400 percent increase in complaints of torture and cruel treatment in the past six years.

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has acknowledged the need to address the critical human rights challenges facing his country. He has committed to strengthening legal protections for human rights, including legislation on the adequate use of force and attention to victims of violence. Mexico's Minister of the Interior, Miguel Angel Osorio Chong, has also underscored the commitment of the Peña Nieto administration to finding the tens of thousands of disappeared individuals whose whereabouts are currently unknown. Several efforts that could address the rampant climate of impunity have been announced, including a reform of the Office of the Attorney General, and victims and civil society groups are eager to see meaningful progress toward these proposals and advances in the investigation and prosecution of cases.

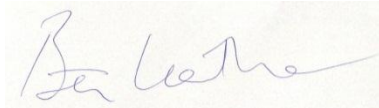
We are now at a critical juncture for human rights in Mexico. As you begin your second term and as Mexican President Peña Nieto commences his administration, we encourage you to ensure that human rights are a central element of the U.S.-Mexico bilateral agenda. Your upcoming visit to Mexico provides a valuable opportunity for you to collect information from diverse sources regarding how the both countries can effectively address human rights challenges that span the border.

We are aware of the priority which the U.S. Government and its embassies give to the participation of human rights defenders and the importance that their voice be heard around the world. This population is at risk in Mexico and continues to suffer threats, attacks, harassment, criminalization, and killings. A meeting with you would help raise the profile of defenders in Mexico and the importance of their work, which in turn would increase their security. Mexican human right defenders would be able to share with you not only priority

human rights issues in Mexico but also the importance of the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which has received important diplomatic support from the United States.

Governmental and nongovernmental groups agree that Mexico must advance efforts to rebuild its social fabric. We urge you to acknowledge and strengthen the vital role that civil society groups and, in particular, human rights defenders play in this effort by carving out a time to engage in a dialogue and hear the perspectives of these groups during your upcoming visit.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Leather".

Ben Leather
Advocacy Coordinator in Mexico
Peace Brigades International

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Johnson".

Jennifer Johnson
Senior Associate for Mexico and Border Policy
Latin America Working Group

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maureen C. Meyer".

Maureen Meyer
Senior Associate for Mexico and Central America
Washington Office on Latin America

CC: The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State
The Honorable E. Anthony Wayne, Ambassador of the United States to Mexico
Ricardo Zúñiga, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs, National Security Council