



Press Release

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U.S. Must Prioritize Human Rights in its Bilateral Relationship with Mexico and Withhold Conditioned Security Assistance

Washington, DC—Each year, the U.S. Department of State must report to Congress on whether Mexico has sufficiently improved its human rights record in several key areas to warrant the release of select conditioned funds for the Mexican military. According to a new memo by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and seven other leading U.S., Mexican, and international human rights groups, the United States should not release this portion of aid to Mexico, given the government’s lack of progress in meeting the human rights requirements included in the assistance package.¹

“Once again, President Peña Nieto’s administration has demonstrated a complete lack of political will to make progress on the human rights crisis in Mexico and hold accountable security forces that perpetrate widespread abuses,” said Maureen Meyer, WOLA Director for Mexico. **“Given the Mexican government’s continued failure to investigate and sanction human rights violations like torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions, it would be a slap in the face to victims if the United States were to say Mexico has made progress on human rights in the past year.”**

According to the memo, in 2017 the Mexican government again failed to thoroughly and credibly investigate and prosecute emblematic cases of human rights violations. This includes the extrajudicial execution of more than a dozen civilians by the Mexican Army in Tlatlaya, Mexico State in June 2014,² as well as the enforced disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero in September 2014.³ In some cases, there is also strong evidence of Mexican authorities obstructing investigations into such abuses: in recent months, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),⁴ the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR),⁵ and a Mexican federal tribunal⁶ highlighted grave irregularities in the Attorney General’s Office investigation into the Ayotzinapa case, including the use of torture to coerce confessions⁷ and the failure to

investigate Federal Police and military officials that may have been involved in the students' disappearance.⁸

While two new laws aimed at taking a tougher stance on torture and enforced disappearances passed in 2017, both laws have been met by government resistance, and their implementation has been slow and incomplete. The Mexican government has openly violated the General Law on Torture since its enactment, including by continuing to allow evidence obtained through torture to be admitted in criminal trials. Additionally, the full funding and implementation of the various search and investigation mechanisms established under the General Law on Disappearances has been severely delayed. Mexican authorities have also failed to properly consult with civil society and family members of the disappeared regarding the implementation of these mechanisms, as is required under the law.

“This is an important opportunity for the State Department to carry out a thorough, accurate assessment of Mexico’s human rights situation,” said Meyer. **“As widespread impunity for human rights violations persists in Mexico, the United States should send a clear message to the outgoing Peña Nieto administration and the incoming government of President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador that it prioritizes human rights in its bilateral relationship with Mexico.”**

READ THE MEMO: <https://bit.ly/2Lli66k>

READ THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: <https://bit.ly/2LmoTXe>

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¹ NGO Memo to U.S. Department of State, “Assessment of the Human Rights Requirements in Foreign Military Financing Assistance to Mexico,” July 23, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Lli66k>.

² WOLA, “In Mexico’s Tlatlaya Massacre, Soldiers Were Ordered to ‘Take Them Out,’” July 2, 2015, <https://bit.ly/2KF9KMd>.

³ See WOLA’s frequently-updated resource page on the Ayotzinapa case: <https://bit.ly/2niFkW8>.

⁴ OHCHR, “Mexico: Ayotzinapa investigation marred by torture and cover-ups – UN report,” March 15, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2uLR2N0>.

⁵ IACHR, “IACHR Presents Performance Report on the Special Follow-Up Mechanism for Ayotzinapa, Mexico, One Year Into its Work,” June 6, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2LvzfDo>.

⁶ Ximena Suárez-Enríquez, “The New Investigative Commission for the Ayotzinapa Case,” WOLA, June 28, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2mGJB5w>.

⁷ Maureen Meyer and Gina Hinojosa, “Arbitrary Arrests and Torture in Mexico’s Ayotzinapa Case,” WOLA, June 28, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2mENRIJ>.

⁸ Maureen Meyer, “The First Year of Work of the Special Follow-Up Mechanism for the Ayotzinapa Case,” WOLA, June 28, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2LngjYc>.