



Press Release

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4 Years on, No Accountability for 43 Forcibly Disappeared Students from Ayotzinapa

Victims' Families Continue to Search for Truth and Justice

Washington, DC—Four years after 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico were attacked by Mexican security forces and [forcibly disappeared](#), the Mexican government has failed to determine their whereabouts or secure convictions for those responsible. The Peña Nieto administration [continues to defend](#) its [thoroughly discredited theory](#) of what happened to the students, leaving the victims' families to search for the truth about the fate of their missing loved ones. Pointing to grave irregularities in the government's official probe, a Mexican federal tribunal recently [ordered the creation](#) of an [Investigative Commission for Truth and Justice](#) to continue pushing the case forward. According to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), a leading research and advocacy organization, the Mexican government must move to fully implement the Investigative Commission to finally bring truth and justice to the victims and their families.

“For the past four years, the Peña Nieto administration has preferred to obstruct the Ayotzinapa investigation instead of uncovering the truth about what happened to the students,” said [Maureen Meyer](#), WOLA Director for Mexico and Migrant Rights. **“López Obrador’s incoming government has an important opportunity to right the wrongs of his predecessor by formally establishing the Investigative Commission and finally getting to the bottom of this case.”**

According to the federal tribunal's ruling, the Commission must redirect the focus of the case towards the [lines of investigation](#) recommended by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)-appointed [Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts](#) that provided technical assistance in the probe from 2015 to 2016. The recommended lines of investigation include investigating Federal Police and military officials that may have participated in the students' disappearance. The Commission will also be responsible for investigating the irregularities and grave human rights violations that tainted the original probe, including strong evidence that Mexican authorities [arbitrarily detained and tortured](#) suspects in order to obtain confessions.

While the investigation will remain under the responsibility of the Attorney General's Office (*Procuraduría General de la República*, PGR), the ruling also calls for the victims and their legal representatives to participate in the Investigative Commission with support from Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos*, CNDH), as well as national and international organizations such as United Nations bodies. The tribunal also recommends that there be a new period where the Group of Experts participates in the investigation. Although the tribunal ruling is legally binding and technically cannot be appealed, at least 10 government agencies have [presented over 100 legal challenges](#) to three federal courts—including the Supreme Court—to halt the creation of the Investigative Commission.

“The Peña Nieto government is doing everything in its power to prevent any serious investigation into the public officials who tortured detainees and obstructed justice in the Ayotzinapa case,” said Meyer. **“While finding the students is paramount, López Obrador's administration should not lose sight of the need to identify and sanction any public officials involved in illegal investigative practices and human rights violations.”**

López Obrador's incoming undersecretary for human rights and immigration, Alejandro Encinas, has pledged that the new administration will exhaust the lines of investigation outlined by the IACHR-appointed Group of Experts. He has expressed openness to [inviting the Experts back to Mexico](#) to continue assisting with the investigation. The president-elect himself plans to [meet with the victims' families](#) tomorrow, on the fourth anniversary of the students' disappearance.

“López Obrador's willingness to meet with the students' families is a promising step forward,” said Meyer. **“The Ayotzinapa case will be a litmus test to see how the López Obrador administration handles the widespread impunity that exists for human rights violations in Mexico.”**

Below is a select list of WOLA's resources on the Ayotzinapa case:

- [The Investigative Commission for the Ayotzinapa Case](#): This commentary explains what the Investigative Commission for Truth and Justice means for the Ayotzinapa case and what the Mexican government must do to ensure it is implemented effectively.
- [The Special Follow-Up Mechanism for the Ayotzinapa Case](#): Summary of the performance report issued by the IACHR on the first year of work of the Special Follow-Up Mechanism for the Ayotzinapa Case. The summary examines how the Mexican government has failed to pursue several lines of investigation highlighted by the IACHR's Group of Experts and provides recommendations for how the investigation should be continued.
- [Arbitrary Detentions and Torture in the Ayotzinapa Investigation](#): Summary of a report by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the Mexican government's use of arbitrary detentions and torture to coerce confessions in the

Ayotzinapa investigation, and the Mexican government's failure to properly investigate and sanction these abuses.

- [Ayotzinapa Resource Page](#): This frequently updated resource page provides important context, developments, and analysis on the Ayotzinapa case. The web page includes resources from WOLA, the Group of Experts, the Special Follow-Up Mechanism, the United Nations, and more.

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