



LATIN AMERICA  
WORKING GROUP



## U.S. NGOs Denounce National Guard Actions in Migration Enforcement at U.S.-Mexico Border

June 27, 2019

The undersigned organizations are gravely concerned by the recent actions of the Mexican National Guard in migration enforcement efforts at the U.S.-Mexico border. Following the agreement that the United States and Mexico reached on June 7, 2019, the Mexican government agreed to the deployment of 6,000 National Guard members, in particular to Mexico's southern border with Guatemala.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the Mexican government confirmed the deployment of an additional 15,000 National Guard members to the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>2</sup> We have observed the insertion of these security forces into migration enforcement activities in Mexico with increasing alarm as their roles, responsibilities, and coordination with Mexico's National Migration Institute (INM) agents are not clear. Moreover, they point to a deeply concerning reversal in the direction of Mexican migration policy as a result of U.S. pressure.

On June 23, 2019, National Guard members approached the building of a migrant shelter, Centro de Atención al Migrante Exodus (CAME), in Agua Prieta, Sonora, to respond to reports of an armed individual outside of the facility. He was actually a municipal police officer supporting the shelter because victims of serious crimes were housed there. After interrogating the police officer, one of the National Guard members proceeded to knock on the door of CAME to ask for information about the individuals inside. When shelter staff told him it was not possible to provide this information, he followed up with more questions about the mission and funding sources of the organization and whether the individuals being held inside were there by their own will. He insisted to be let in. He proceeded to state that he would call INM to conduct a migration inspection inside the building. During these proceedings another National Guard member filmed a CAME employee with a cell phone. CAME staff established contact with Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) as the incident was going on, and the Commission requested that the staff take pictures of the incident. While staff took photos, the National Guard member called the action "illegal."

We are very concerned by the nature of these actions by the National Guard which appear to have the goal of intimidating or questioning the work of civil society organizations, including migrant shelters that have been providing humanitarian assistance and support to migrants for decades. We denounce any sort of intimidation or harassment by Mexican National Guard members against civil society organizations, including migrant shelters.

We remain concerned by the role of the National Guard in migration enforcement activities across Mexico. Security forces should be held accountable for intimidation or threats against civil society

<sup>1</sup> United States Department of State "*U.S.-Mexico Joint Declaration*", US Department of State. 7 June 2019. [www.state.gov/u-s-mexico-join-declaration/](http://www.state.gov/u-s-mexico-join-declaration/).

<sup>2</sup> AFP, "15 mil elementos de la Guardia Nacional impedirán el cruce de migrantes hacia EU" Animal Politico, 24 de junio 2019. <http://bit.ly/2xfX610>.

organizations as well as cases of excessive use of force and human rights violations. We urge the Mexican government to clarify the role of the National Guard with respect to migration enforcement activities and to not condone any activity that serves to criminalize human rights defenders. We also urge the Mexican government to respect the rights of individuals to the freedom of movement and the right to seek international protection in the United States or in Mexico, and to refrain from entering into a Safe Third Country agreement with the United States which would further put at risk the safety and well-being of asylum seekers.

Signed

Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology  
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)  
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)  
Women's Refugee Commission