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Frequent Abuse against a Backdrop of Impunity Human Rights on Mexico's Northern Border

Over the last two decades, Mexico's northern borderlands have been beleaguered by a high degree of public insecurity. Given the region's proximity to the United States, problems such as the northbound trade in drugs and immigrants and the southward flow of contraband of all types have generated regional levels of violence not found elsewhere in the country. Violence and insecurity along the border frequently stem from confrontations between the various groups competing for control over the area's illegal activities—often with the protection of various law enforcement agencies. Indeed, police groups who are involved in illegal activities or who, in the course of their work, operate outside their legal boundaries are also a major problem. Moreover, the militarization of the area—a byproduct of the War on Drugs—has also had a negative impact on human rights in northern Mexico. Clearly, the abuse of power—one of the worst legacies of Mexico's history—remains a problem today. This means that in addition to suffering from economic hardship, millions of Mexicans—particularly the most vulnerable—are the victims of serious violations of their basic rights.

By Arturo Solís, Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C.

In states with large indigenous populations (such as Chiapas), complaints of human rights violations usually cite the Mexican military and paramilitary groups who attack civilians suspected of being members of or sympathizers with guerrilla groups. On Mexico's northern border, however, added to the list are agents of the Federal Judicial Police (frequently members of the military "on leave"), officers of various State Judicial Police (PJE) units, and municipal policemen, who, taken together, represent the region's primary perpetrators of human rights violations. Torture, abduction, forced disappearance, robbery, extortion, assault, illegal entry, and murder have become common components of the workaday tasks of such law enforcement agents.

Abuse of Authority and Torture: Frequent Crimes

Torture is one of the illegal practices most often committed by law-enforcement officers in northern Mexico. In 1997, 104 of the human rights violations reported to the Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (Center for Border Studies and Human Rights Promotion, CEFPRODHAC) involved torture (see table, p. 3). According to CEFPRODHAC interviews with torture victims, perpetrators resort, among other methods, to covering the heads of detainees with plastic bags in order to provoke a sensation of asphyxiation and hitting detainees in the stomach (to minimize signs of violence). During these torture sessions, victims' heads are normally covered with a hood so they will not recognize their tormentors, and they are also commonly handcuffed or hog-tied. Afterwards, the perpetrators usually threaten to torture a detainee's family members if the victim should file a complaint. Given these practices, it is disturbing but not uncommon that some of those being "interviewed" die while in police custody.

For example, one of the first cases CEFPRODHAC received in 1997 was the torture and probable mur-



Tijuana police use a flashlight to search a pedestrian for drugs in one of the city's poorer areas.

Archive Photo, 1998

der of Nuevo Laredo teenager Erick Cárdenas. On January 4, the 16-year-old Cárdenas was detained by municipal police after taking part in a brief scuffle. He was taken to the local jail, where two hours later he was found dead in his cell. The municipal authorities explained that Cárdenas had committed suicide by hanging himself from the bars of the cell window with his T-shirt. Pictures of the corpse, however, show signs of torture, including bruises on his back that may have been caused by being forcibly pressed against the cell bars. The victim's genitals showed signs of injuries caused by electric shock—probably with a *chicharra*, a barbaric instrument of torture that continues to be used in Mexico today. Behind the victim's ear was found evidence of blows caused by a blunt object, and other parts of Cárdenas' body also showed signs of blows and injuries.

Unfortunately, CEFPRODHAC has found that when an official or a police officer is accused of having committed human rights violations like torture or murder (as in the Cárdenas case), the intradepartmental office of the comptrollership responsible for investigating the crime usually clears the accused of

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the charges. This seriously handicaps the effective administration of justice and creates in the civilian population the sense that abusive officials are untouchable.

Indeed, the perpetuation of the border's human rights problems is closely linked to the inadequate administration of justice. Human rights violators who are arraigned before a judge often escape punishment, because prosecutors decline to follow proper investigative procedures, refuse to receive or ratify complaints and accusations, fail to present conclusive evidence, erroneously reclassify crimes, or falsify the traits of the accused or the circumstances surrounding the crime. For instance, one frequent method of obscuring the true cause of an arrestee's death is the falsification of autopsy reports; injuries that were caused with criminal intent go ignored, or, as in the case of Erick Cárdenas, the probability that they were caused by torture is severely downplayed.

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Prisoners, Migrants, and Activists Particularly at Risk

In northern Mexico's jails, poverty, not crime, is punished: more than 98% of all prisoners in the area are indigent with little schooling, arrested for carrying small amounts of drugs to the border from other parts of Mexico. Cruel, degrading treatment is common in these facilities, where as many as eight inmates are crowded into each small cell. The sale of protection and comfortable cells; the existence of special punishment cells, where inmates are kept in subhuman conditions; the lack of medical care, medicine, and counseling; insufficient food; and the availability of all kinds of drugs are chronic problems. In addition, prison authorities commit acts of extortion, robbery, and in some extreme cases, homicide. In Tamaulipas, the subhuman conditions that plague the state's prisons have led to riots by desperate inmates seeking to make their complaints known to state authorities and the media. But the treatment afforded to the general prison population stands in stark contrast to that enjoyed by the few privileged prisoners found in each such facility—wealthy drug traffickers, who are allowed to live alone in comfortable cells without worrying about being extorted or attacked.

Perhaps to a greater extent than any other sector of the population, migrant workers seeking to enter the United States suffer particularly extreme violations of their human rights. Utterly vulnerable, many of the thousands of Mexicans and Central Americans who arrive at Mexico's northern border each day hoping to cross north have been the victims of aggression by various Mexican law enforcement agencies. This abuse includes rape, beatings, incarceration, robbery, and even murder. Once in the border zone, would-be crossers—especially those from other countries—are hounded on the streets and in their hotel rooms by police looking for pay-offs. Meanwhile, the region's so-called "coyotes" or *pateros* (smugglers) frequently enjoy police protection and, therefore, experience impunity to commit abuses against migrants as well.

During all of 1997 and the first nine months of 1998, CEFPRODHAC documented 113 attacks against migrants near the Rio Grande in Tamaulipas. Among other serious incidents, 27 attacks with firearms or other weapons were documented. Near Nuevo Laredo, five migrants were bludgeoned to death, while

another 22 were beaten and robbed by thieves. Over the same period, five women were the victims of sexually related attacks while attempting to cross the Rio Grande; in Reynosa, one woman was raped by four smugglers; in Matamoros, another was accosted by two coyotes; and near Brownsville, two women were raped, one of them by seven smugglers

After running that gauntlet, many border crossers drown in the river or suffer similar accidents. Over the last 21 months CEFPRODHAC, has documented three migrants decapitated by trains, 26 who had to have limbs amputated after entering the U.S. concealed in trains, another 29 migrants dead of sunstroke, and 65 injured on the U.S. side of the border when their vehicles overturned during Border Patrol or police pursuits. And once across, migrant workers are subjected to sundry forms of mistreatment by the U.S. Border Patrol. Finally, migrants who successfully cross the border may die in the inhospitable deserts that await them up north. Since 1997, a total of 259 migrants have been found dead on U.S. territory. Many of them drowned in the Rio Grande, but others were found in desert areas further north (see *borderlines* vol. 6, no. 6).

Human rights abuses can also be politically motivated. One case in point occurred in the port of Tampico, Tamaulipas, on May 1, 1998. A group of persons distributing fliers among workers in a May Day parade were arrested. The fliers, signed by the regional committee of the Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, criticized neoliberalism and, among other things, called on workers to struggle for democracy and union freedom. Six agents from the local office of the State Judicial Police arrived and detained the activists without giving any explanation. The group was whisked off to police headquarters for questioning, where they were kept incommunicado for two hours.

Key Problems: Poverty, Drug Trafficking, and a Climate of Impunity

Mexico's recurring economic crises and the chronic joblessness they create compel persons who feel they have few employment options to commit crimes—usually robbery. These individuals are arrested and tortured and often found guilty of other crimes that the police were either unable to solve or wanted to cover



up, since they were committed by organized crime gangs under police protection.

In addition to robbery, drug trafficking is a common activity along the border and, as such, is another major contributor to the pervasiveness of human rights violations in the region. In addition to the disappearances, injuries, and deaths that occur during feuds between rival drug-trafficking gangs, the involvement of law enforcement officials in the drug trade exacerbates a number of problems. On the one hand, official protection of narco-traffickers leads to a tremendous sense of lawlessness in a region where human rights are, for many, already a nonconcept. Statistics compiled by CEFPRODHAC illustrate this fact: in the first months of 1998, 157 homicides were recorded in Tamaulipas, including 40 related to drug trafficking. Yet only 64 persons have been arrested in relation to these crimes; the suspects in 33 of the murders have managed to “escape” police custody, and 57 of the crimes have not been solved.

Additionally, erratic or violent behavior by police officers is many times due to the fact that they themselves are drug users. For example, in two drug screening tests conducted among the Reynosa police force, 41 officers were found to have used marijuana or cocaine—a high percentage, given that Reynosa has 300 police officers.

The drug trade is tremendously lucrative, and as a result, widespread corruption at high levels is another serious problem compounding the borderlands’ human rights problems. It is no accident, for example, that during his tenure Tamaulipas’s current governor has had three different attorneys general, all of whom have received bitter criticism for their inefficiency and the rampant corruption in their offices. All three are suspected of malfeasance, including having ties to drug traffickers. The climate of impunity that this situation has created represents the greatest obstacle to making headway against human rights violations.

Official Human Rights Mechanisms Insufficient

Even when the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has stepped in, this climate of impunity remains a significant barrier to progress. On the one hand, the CNDH’s legal limitations and the absence of adequate mechanisms to monitor compliance with its recommendations reduce the commission’s effec-

Human Rights Violations in Tamaulipas in 1997	
Violation	Number of Cases Reported to CEFPRODHAC
Abuse of Authority	131
Physical Torture	104
Psychological Torture	13
Extortion	103
Theft	61
Unlawful Detention	45
Influence Peddling	30
Unlawful Entry	26
Refusal to Enforce the Law	13
Damage to Property	7
False Accusation	6
Homicide	4
Delay in Administering Justice	2
Attempted Homicide	1
Deprivation of Property	1
Authority Responsible	
“Preventive” Police (investigation of minor crimes)	103
State Judicial Police (investigation of violent crimes)	48
Federal Judicial Police (investigation of violent crimes)	40
Local Traffic Police	20
Federal Tax Enforcement Officers	17
Rehabilitation Center (state prison)	15

Source: Centro Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CEFPROHDAC).

tiveness. The commission is only authorized to make nonbinding recommendations and cannot intervene in cases involving local or state authorities because its jurisdiction is limited to federal matters. On the other hand, when the CNDH does intervene, administrative and penal authorities still manage to elude being held accountable for violating constitutional guarantees. In general, due to misinformation generated by those receiving CNDH recommendations, the CNDH assumes that its conclusions have been acted upon—despite the fact that in countless cases abusers are not even sanctioned. This seriously undermines the commission’s credibility and negatively impacts upon the overall human rights context in the region.

Government institutions in Mexico face a number of other obstacles that prevent them from effectively defending

human rights. For example, the Human Rights Commission of the State of Tamaulipas (CDHT) is mired in bureaucratic quicksand, its appointees selected not for their experience in human rights defense work or because of their social commitment but because of their loyalty to the PRI-led government. Indeed, some of the commission’s highest appointees were reassigned there from other government ministries. So notorious is such political cronyism in Tamaulipas, that the president of the commission managed to be elected for a third consecutive term by pushing through an amendment to the state Constitution that erased previous restrictions on commission presidents serving more than two terms.

In addition, state human rights commissions often reject complaints filed by groups such as CEFPRODHAC on the

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grounds of faulty procedure, lack of witnesses, or expiration of the statute of limitations. In 1997, for example, CEFPROD-HAC filed 39 complaints before the CNDH, mostly against officials of the district attorney's office, police officers, and members of the military who it accused of human rights violations. The commission only issued a single recommendation in response to the complaint submissions; the other 38 resulted in what the CNDH terms "friendly settlements" or were dismissed either due to a lack of evidence or because they were considered incomplete. And even though the CNDH has made a commitment to reveal the terms of "friendly settlements," it has yet to provide any documents or information related to these negotiations. As a matter of fact, one of the criticisms most frequently leveled against the CNDH is its failure to disseminate extensive information regarding its recommendations. The commission doesn't release this information to the media, lacks a press department, and issues its recommendations in a semi-monthly gazette, which it does not make easily available to the media or to human rights NGOs.

The weakness of the mechanisms and institutions set up to guarantee human rights in Mexico is evidenced by the low number of state officials and police tried for human rights violations. For example, despite the numerous known cases in which detainees in Tamaulipas have been tortured, not one perpetrator is in jail or has been tried, indicating the ease with which officers can break the law in Mexico. Violators know that the vast network of corruption and

impunity to which they belong affords them protection to perpetrate illegal deeds. Given this backdrop, and notwithstanding official statistics, citizens are reluctant to submit complaints to government human rights offices.

Militarization of the Border Compounds the Problem

Another major problem is the use of the military on the border in civilian law enforcement capacities. Amidst the growing problems caused by drug trafficking in Mexico, over the last decade the federal government has enhanced the participation of the armed forces in counternarcotics operations. In particular, since the six-year term of Ernesto Zedillo began in December 1994, there has been a large-scale deployment of military forces throughout the country to wage the war on drugs. Some salient features of this policy are arbitrary searches of civilians and the establishment of military checkpoints on highways, in violation of Article 120 of the Constitution, which states that "in peacetime, no military authority may exercise duties other than having an exact connection with military functions."

The open participation of the military in criminal investigations—which is outside of any legal framework—has opened the door for more human rights violations. Since the military's role in the drug war was expanded, the Defense Ministry has not answered a single complaint submitted by grassroots human rights groups regarding abuses by the military, the most notorious of which include torture, unjustified arrest, robbery, extortion, illegal entry, and homicide (see story p. 10). Unfamiliarity with conducting police work

among civilian populations and ignorance of the laws protecting citizen rights lead soldiers to commit these abuses. What's more, the military has been ineffective in fighting narcotics; it almost always arrests persons possessing or transporting small quantities of drugs, but rarely apprehends kingpins.

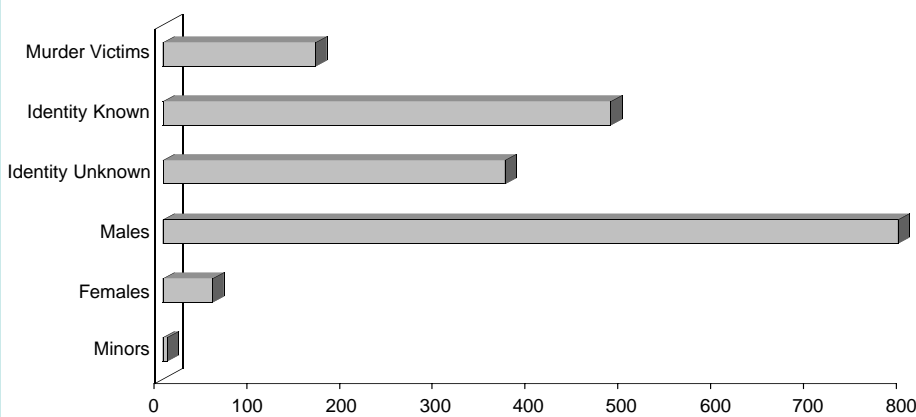
Conclusion: Changes Needed from the Bottom Up

In general, Mexicans are convinced of the need to build a framework in which citizens can demand that the authorities carry out their duties strictly within prescribed boundaries. Today, most citizens are not only aware of their rights but also recognize the possibility of demanding that these rights be respected. This points to the beginning of a more prominent role for civil society in its relationship with the state. Today, the government faces community-based groups that are seeking to reclaim the spaces denied them through the authorities' abuse of power.

But despite these initial gains by civil society in defending its rights, border regions such as Tamaulipas continue to witness pervasive and serious breaches of human rights. Granted, many of the crimes in the region are committed by dangerous individuals whom the authorities are obliged to stop, but they must do so within legal limits. Unfortunately, the use of force by the police in Mexico does not generally occur within the boundaries established by the law. Indeed, many law enforcement officials contend that concerns over human rights prevent them from effectively carrying out their duties.

As occurs in any top-down presidentialist system like the one that (notwithstanding recent steps toward democratization) continues to exist in Mexico, the regime does not truly respect its own laws. This, logically, produces a general disregard for the concepts of individual human and civil rights. As long as the Mexican government does not possess the political will to allow a democratic opening, to fight official corruption and police abuse, to introduce effective mechanisms of oversight and accountability, or to educate officials regarding human rights, and as long as there is collusion between prosecutors and judges to refuse to document tortures of detainees, northern Mexico's human rights problem will be difficult to eradicate. ■

Deaths in the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande, 1990-1997



Source: Centro Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CEFPRO-HDAC).

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Human Rights in Northern Mexico

The following list of publications and contacts is part of INCITRA's ongoing effort to make useful information and networking contacts available to borderlands residents and policy-makers. This directory is an organic work-in-progress: please advise us of any necessary additions or corrections. They will be added to our database and used in future publications.

Readers looking for a comprehensive source of information regarding the human rights situation in Mexico's northern borderlands will find that publications by the Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (CEFP-RODHAC) offer readers current statistics, a grassroots-level perspective, and penetrating analysis. Amnesty International's *Mexico: Concerns Regarding Torture and Ill-Treatment in Mexico* provides a more general overview of the human rights situation in all of Mexico; those interested in learning about the spate of murders of female maquiladora workers in Ciudad Juárez should read Debbie Nathan's article, "Death Comes to the Border," printed last year in *The Nation*. Publications of the federal and state offices of the Comisión de Derechos Humanos offer an official view of human rights in northern Mexico, while Raul Sanchez's "Mexico's Governmental Human Rights Commissions: An Ineffective Response to Widespread Human Rights Violations" offers a less optimistic assessment of the government's response to human rights problems in Mexico.

On the web CEFP-RODHAC, the Mexican Academy for Human Rights, and the Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos are all good places to start.

In terms of contacts, a number of regional NGO's and community based organizations operating in the border region represent a wealth of on-the-spot information regarding human rights in northern Mexico's borderlands. These include the Commission in Solidarity and Defense of Human Rights (COSY-DDHAC), CEFP-RODHAC, and the Centro Binacional de Derechos Humanos, A.C.

For information regarding contacts or to acquire listed information, contact INCITRA-USA at (505) 388-0208.

Contacts

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Hermosillo, Son.
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Voice: (62) 171034 or 56-57-04 (cellular)
Fax: (62) 171124
Email: dgtzmen@tiburon.rtn.uson.mx

The Sonoran Academy is dedicated to raising consciousness about human rights issues in Mexico, particularly in the state of Sonora and its municipalities. It participates in the legal defense of people whose human rights have been violated, in addition to researching and disseminating information on specific cases of these violations.

Albergue Juvenil del Desierto

Carpinteros No. 1515
Col. Industrial, Mexicali, B.C. 21010
Contacts: Blanca Villaseñor, Monica Oropeza
Voice: (65) 54-53-64
Fax: (65) 54-60-45

The group is a pillar of the Migrant Defense Coalition and provides assistance to immigrant minors and women.

Asociación Defensora de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (ADDH)

Zaragoza Norte 304 Altos 2
Apdo. 9, Col. Zona Centro
Piedras Negras, Coah.
Contact: Dr. Miguel Rojas Hernández
Voice: (878) 2-09-85
Fax: (878) 2-31-34

The association is active in human rights promotion, defense, training, and education in the state of Coahuila. One of its principal tenets is to not belong to or cooperate with commissions or societies sponsored by governments—state, municipal or federal—or by political parties so that its citizen-participation work will remain independent and compatible with its social actions.

Casa de la Madre, A.C.

Calle Galileo 2305
Col. Postal Tijuana, B.C. 22350
Contact: Madre Gema Lisot
Voice/Fax: (66) 83-05-75

A shelter for immigrant women and children, the organization is part of the Migrant Defense Coalition. In conjunction with official and independent agencies and institutions of the state of Baja California, it holds events where information is disseminated on immigrant conditions.

INCITRA

Information for Citizen Transboundary Action on the Environment
Información Ciudadana Transfronteriza

INCITRA is sponsored by the Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC) in Silver City, NM. INCITRA aims to promote sustainable development in the borderlands by serving as a clearinghouse for information and resources. INCITRA research can provide you with the specific information you want, based on your needs, according to your requests. Call and put INCITRA to work for you.

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The Interhemispheric Resource Center is a non-profit research and policy institute. Funding for INCITRA-USA is provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Harris and Eliza Kemper Fund.

Casa del Migrante, A.C.

Calle Galileo 239
Col. Postal, Tijuana, B.C. 22350
Contact: Gilberto Martínez
Voice: (66) 82-51-80, 82-52-96
Fax: (66) 82-63-58
Email: sadelmig@Voice.nor.net

Casa del Migrante provides humanitarian assistance for immigrants by caring for their basic necessities: nutrition, lodging, medical attention, and spiritual counseling. It is also a key member of the Migrant Defense Coalition, whose purpose is to establish a permanent forum on migration with the objective of developing an alternative means of assisting migrants in improving their quality of life. Currently, the organization helps more than 10 thousand people per year.

Casa del Migrante de Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe

Ave. Hidalgo No. 401
Tecate, B.C.
Contact: José Luis Castañeda Ramírez
Voice: (66) 54-24-62

Working jointly with Casa del Migrante, this group serves as an immigrant support center, providing humanitarian assistance including food, lodging, medical attention, and spiritual guidance to any and all migrants.

Casa YMCA

Bldv. Cuauhtemoc Sur No.3170
Col. Chula Vista
Tijuana, B.C.
Contact: David Monarrez
Voice: (66) 86-13-59, 86-22-12 or 86-22-11
Email: casaymca@manoamano.org.mx
Website: <http://www.manoamano.org.mx>

Casa YMCA provides temporary lodging, health, and counseling services for Mexicans and Americans ages 11 through 17 through its Hand to Hand without Borders (Mano a Mano sin Fronteras) program. The group has a youth exchange program wherein participation in community development is promoted. Casa YMCA is part of the Migrant Defense Coalition.

Centro Binacional de Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CBDH)

Ave. Paseo del Centenario 3B-11
Río Tijuana
Tijuana, B.C.
Contact: Victor Clark Alfaro
Voice/Fax: (66) 82-85-50

CBDH focuses on human rights, with an emphasis on three groups: migrants, sexual service providers, and torture victims. The group's objectives are to investigate and document human rights violations and the government corruption that may be associated with them. CBDH serves as a channel for medical services through the Patronato de Salud Comunitaria.

CBDH Centro de Apoyo al Migrante

Andador Peatonal, Garita Tijuana-San Ysidro
Apdo. Postal 848
Tijuana, B.C. 22000

This office of CBDH deals exclusively with migrants who register complaints of human rights violations at the border crossing. The Center attends to an average of 5 complaints a day.

Centro de Apoyo a Migrantes

Lázaro Cárdenas No. 210-17, Col. Zona Centro
Reynosa, Tamps.
Contact: Amelia Acosta Morales
Voice: (89) 22-22-71 or (5) 264-3811
Email: camrey@mail.giga.com

The center promotes and defends the human rights of migrant workers and their families. It holds workshops, providing information on migration, its causes, and its effects. It sponsors the organization of workers in their places of origin, on the border, and at their destination sites.

Centro de Apoyo a Migrantes Regional Offices:

Centro de Apoyo a Migrantes.
Juan de la Barrera No. 513
Col. Sur. Altos
Cd. Juárez, Chih.
Voice: (16) 13-28-18

Centro de Apoyo a Migrantes.
Callejón Miguel Hidalgo No. 90
Altos, Interior 2, Zona Centro
Nogales, Son.
Voice: (63) 12-03-00
Email: camnog@internexos.net

Centro de Apoyo a Migrantes
Bldv. Agua Caliente No.8410, local 26
Esq. con Ave. Negrete
Centro Comercial Correos
Tijuana, B.C. 22000
Contact: Raúl Ramírez Baena
Voice/Fax: (66) 34-18-91
Email: camt@Voice.nor.net

Centro de Atención al Indígena Migrante

Rodríguez Puebla No. 32, Col. Centro
Delegación Cuauhtemoc
Mexico, D.F. 06020
Contact: Josefina Bravo
Voice: (5) 702-6976, 702-7023
Fax: (5) 704-5812

Established in April of 1998, the center is a division of the federal district's Integral Family Development (DIF) branch. It promotes and defends the human and social rights of migrant indigenous people.

Centro de Derechos Humanos y Educación Cívica

San Pedro Mezquital 2201, Paseo del Sol
Mexicali, B.C. 21100
Contact: José Moreno Mena
Voice/Fax: (65) 66-29-85
Email: jmoreno@faro.ens.uabc.mx

The center promotes the defense of migrants' human rights by disseminating information on, monitoring, and denouncing the abuses migrants suffer. It has held community workshops, and has published studies about women who were driven out of their places of origin, about women who have been deported, and about the plight of undocumented minors in Mexicali.

Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CEFPRODHAC)

Zaragoza No. 650, 3. piso, Despacho 13
Zona Centro
Reynosa, Tamps.
Contact: Arturo Solís or Omeheira López
Voice: (89) 22-49-22
Fax: (89) 22-24-41
Email: cefprodh@mail.giga.com

Website: <http://www.giga.com/~cefprodh/index.html>

CEFPRODHAC is a nongovernmental organization founded in 1990 to promote human rights in Mexico, with a strong focus on the northeastern states. The group works in areas of migration, environment, labor rights, electoral reform, maquiladoras, human rights, women, and children. The major objectives of the organization include the denunciation of human rights violations on both sides of the border, provision of services to victims, and assessment of current laws, studies, and current research. The group collaborates closely with a number of U.S.-based immigrants' rights organizations, including Border Association for Refugees from Central America and Casa de Proyecto Libertad.

CEFPRODHAC Regional Offices:

CEFPRODHAC
Reynosa No. 1312 Altos Desp. 3, Zona Centro
Nuevo Laredo, Tamps.
Voice/Fax: (87) 12-22-90

CEFPRODHAC
Pino Suárez No. 147-Interior 2, Zona Centro
Cd. Miguel Alemán, Tamaulipas
Voice: (897) 2-27-28

Centro de Información y Estudios Migratorios de Tijuana (CIEM)

Apdo. Postal 1531
Tijuana, B.C.
Contact: José de Jesús Marrufo
Voice/Fax: (66) 89-26-54

The center provides counsel and defends human rights for immigrants, both domestic and foreign. It also researches and carries out case studies on the phenomenon of migration.

Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CADHAC)

Zapata No. 4417, Col. Guadalupe Victoria
Guadalupe, N.L. 64000
Contact: María Emilia Espejo
Voice: (8) 343-5058
Fax: (8) 343-6618
Email: cadhac@mail.intercable.net

CADHAC represents a group of independent citizens working together to defend human rights in four primary ways: education, protection of the dignity of people marginalized by society, legal proceedings, and the development of better communication with the media and society in general.

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Coahuila

Calle Jesús Acuña Narro 113 5to. piso
Col. República
Apartado Postal C.P.I. No. 51
Saltillo, Coah. 25280
Contact: María Elena Rebollozo Marquez
Voice: (84) 16-21-10 y 16-20-50
Toll free: 01-800-84-123-00
Email: cdhesal@interclan.net ~or~ cdhtorr@coah1.telmexnet.mx

The commission is a state-government sponsored human rights office in Coahuila.

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Chihuahua

Calle Décima y Mina No. 1000,
Col. Centro
Chihuahua, Chih. 3000
Contact: Heliodoro Juárez González
Voice/Fax: (14) 10-08-28

The commission is a state-government sponsored human rights office in Chihuahua.

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Nuevo León

Morones Prieto No. 2110 Poniente, Local 2
Edificio Manchester, Col. Loma Larga
Monterrey, N.L.
Contact: Ninfa Delia Domínguez de los Santos
Voice: (83) 45-86-45 or 45-86-44
Fax: (83) 44-91-99

The commission is a state-government sponsored human rights office in Nuevo Leon.

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Tamaulipas

Calle 14, No. 355 Sur
Ciudad Victoria, Tamps.
Voice: (131) 2-45-65
Fax: (131) 2-46-12

The commission is a state-government sponsored human rights office in Tamaulipas.

Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de Derechos Humanos, A.C. (COSYDDHAC)

Calle 24, No. 3007, Col. Pacífico
Chihuahua, Chih.
Contact: María Teresa Guerrero, Camilo Daniel Pérez
Voice: (14) 10-77-55
Fax: (14) 15-04-86

COSYDDHAC is recognized for being an effective and well-informed defender and organizer in the areas of human rights, sustainable development, environmental protection, and human health. It is a successful organizer of popular education campaigns that use the media and citizen mobilization.

Comité de Derechos Humanos de la Agrupación Multidisciplinaria de Profesionistas en Ojinaga, A.C.

Calle La Paz No. 402
Ojinaga, Chih. 32881
Contact: Fernando Gallegos, Jesús Manuel Maldonado Olivos
Voice: (145) 306-76, 304-21
Fax: (145) 303-64
Email: gallfam@swbell.net

This group studies, promotes, and participates in protecting human rights in terms of the attitudes, conditions, and violations that affect them. It fosters a human rights culture and respect for those who are most vulnerable. It participates in workshops, discussions, lectures, and motivational conferences in civics classes with students from local schools. It also participates with authorities in of concrete cases of abuse and offers guidance programs in the human rights field. The committee collaborates with international authorities in resolving immigration cases, parental abuse cases, and more.

Comité Independiente de Chihuahua Pro Defensa a los Derechos Humanos

Constitución 611 Sur
Col. Barreal
Cd. Juárez, Chih.
Contact: Judith Galarza Campos
Voice: (16) 12-48-90, 20-46-75

This group is known for providing services to victims of human rights violations and their families. The group is a member of the Coordination of Nongovernmental Organizations in Defense of Women in Mexico, the Association of Families of the Detained-Disappeared, Victims of Human Rights Violations, and the Latin American Federation of Associations for Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared (FEDFAM).

Comité de Participación y Defensa Ciudadana, A.C.

Madero 111 Poniente
Tecate, B.C. 21410
Voice: (665) 416-48
Fax: (665) 437-14
Contact: Concepción Bizcarra de Aramburo

This group defends citizens whose rights have been affected by urban development policies and works on issues that damage or adversely affect the community's economic well being. The committee provides technical and legal advice, as well.

El Diario de Juarez

Av. Paseo triunfo de la República #3505
Cd. Juárez, Chih.
Voice: (16) 29-19-00
Fax: (16) 29-19-90
Email: djuarez@buzon.diario.com.mx
Website: <http://www.diario.com.mx/dcj>

This online, daily newspaper consistently reports on the brutal murders of women that have plagued Juarez, as well as on other human rights violations in the city and region.

Grupo 8 de marzo de Ciudad Juárez

Río Aguanaval No. 1256
 Cd. Juárez, Chih. 32350
 Contact: Esther Chávez Cano
 Voice: (16) 13-71-93
 Fax: (16) 13-71-93
 Email: echavez@infolnk.net

This group helps women rape victims, providing medical attention and emotional support for both victims and families. It works with the Ocho de Marzo group in Chihuahua to reform the law, which has resulted in stricter punishment of rape crimes, penalties for sexual harassment, and investigation of the murders of women. The group fights domestic violence, unethical medical examinations performed on women victims of sex crimes, violence against children, and every other act that violates human rights.

Grupo Feminista 8 de Marzo de Chihuahua

Calle 13 No 1608
 Col. Obrera
 Chihuahua, Chih. 31350
 Contact: Irma Campos
 Voice: (14) 14- 73-77 and (14) 15-38-49
 Fax: (14) 14- 73-77 and (14) 15-38-49
 Email: irmacamp@chih1.telmex.net.mx

This group presents legal reform initiatives in favor of women, some of which are now part of the State Penal Code and the State Law of Education. The group is currently part of the National Forum of Women and Population Policies, which holds as a primary objective the carrying out of the Action Platform of Cairo, which promotes respect for the human rights of women, antidiscrimination, sexual and reproductive rights, and a life free of poverty with equality and without violence. It holds conferences, workshops, and forums aimed at changing awareness and culture.

Mexican Academy for Human Rights

Filosofía y Letras No. 88
 Apdo. Postal 70-473
 Col. Copilco - Universidad
 México, D.F. 04360
 Contact: Oscar González Cesar
 Voice: (5) 659-49-80
 Fax: (5) 658-72-79
 Email: amdh@laneta.apc.org ~or~ acmedehu@servidor.unam.mx
 Website: <http://www.unam.mx/amdh/indexi.htm>

The Mexican Academy for Human Rights works to promote human rights in Mexico. Messages, bulletins, mail archives, documents, and links to other sites associated with human rights issues are available. The website offers text in both English and Spanish.

Organización Lilith de Mujeres Independientes, A.C.

Ave. Hidalgo No. 71
 Zona Centro
 Apdo. Postal 82
 Tecate, B.C. 21400
 Contact: Laura Gutiérrez, Coordinadora General
 Voice: (665) 460-54
 Fax: (66) 34-18-91

This organization benefits women by promoting a culture of equality between men and women, supporting women as they deal with issues related to them, and developing activities that help create programs for the development of women. The group's work centers around intrafamily violence, reproductive health, and women's human rights. The organization provides medical, psychiatric, and legal services to women, girls, and boys who require them.

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos y Protección

Ciudadana del Estado de Baja California
 Blvd. Agua Caliente 10440-7, Edificio Barranquitas
 Col. Aviación
 Tijuana, B.C. 22400
 Contact: Antonio García Sánchez
 Voice: (66) 81-74-40 or 81-74-41
 Toll free: 01-800-025-45-76
 Fax: (66) 81-74-41

This organization watches over the legality of all actions taken by public officials in order to promote justice and safeguard human rights in everything the administration's servants do. It works with authorities charged with investigating the mistakes of officials and sanctioning those who commit them.

Gophers and Listservs

Derechos Humanos

Send email to derechos-l-request@lists.best.com and leave the subject line blank. Write *subscribe* in the message space.

Derechos Humanos en México

Send email to mex@derechos.org and leave the subject line blank. Write *subscribe news* in the message space.

Gopher Directory at laneta

[gopher://laneta.apc.org:70/11/ini.lnt/ai](http://laneta.apc.org:70/11/ini.lnt/ai)
 Extensive Spanish language gopher sites of Amnesty International.

Human Rights Action Network

Send email to hr-actions-request@lists.best.com and leave subject line blank. Write *subscribe* in the message space.

Human Rights Discussion List

Send email to hrrights-request@lists.best.com and leave subject line blank. Write *subscribe* in the message space.

Human Rights News List

Send email to hr-news-subscribe@derechos.net

Human Rights NGOs Mailing List

Send email to ngos-subscribe@derechos.net

Lista Para Organismos de Derechos Humanos

Send email to ong-request@lists.best.com and leave the subject line blank. Write *subscribe* in the message space.

Novedades en Derechos

Send email to hrn@derechos.org and leave the subject line blank. Write *subscribe news* in the message space.

Websites

Amnesty International: Publications on the United Mexican States

<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/countries/indx241.htm>
 This site offers publications and news releases since 1996, including *Mexico "Disappearances": a Black Hole in the Protection of Human Rights* and *Overcoming Fear: Human Rights Violations Against Women in Mexico*.

Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/cemexico/recommend.htm>
 Full text of *Recommendations to the Governments of Central America and Mexico*. Also includes recommendations to the Organization of American States (OAS).

Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1998/AMR/25100398.htm>
 This site has the May 1998 report *United States of America: Human Rights Concerns in the Border Region with Mexico*. This report deals with issues such as INS detention experiences of women and juveniles and the militarization of the border.

Casa Alianza

<http://www.casa-alianza.org/>

An international organization, Casa Alianza works to protect, defend, and empower street children in Latin America. The site provides enlightening background information and a material resource catalogue on human rights, advocacy, and AIDS information. You can review *Street Children in Mexico* for a better understanding of the causes and consequences of life in the streets for the children of Mexico.

Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas A.C. (CDHFBC)

<http://www.laneta.apc.org/cdhbcasas/index.htm>

CDHFBC's objective is the promotion and defense of human rights. The group engages in numerous human rights support activities, including legal defense, information gathering, investigation, networking, and communication. The site is available in English and Spanish, offers information on the organization, and provides links to publications.

Centro De Derechos Humanos "Fray Francisco De Vitoria, O.P." A.C. (CDHFV)

<http://www.laneta.apc.org/vitoria/>

The group provides workshops on capacity building and organization, and it supports the production of educational materials. This site is a good tool for accessing articles and briefs about the current human rights situation in Mexico and will soon become searchable in both English and Spanish.

Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez, A.C. (PRODH)

<http://mixcoac.uia.mx/PRODH/default.htm>

PRODH is a nongovernmental human rights organization that bases its activity on a universal, integrated, and dynamic conception of human rights. Its aim is to create a spirit of diversity among and tolerance and respect for the dignity of persons and human groups among society. The organization hopes to reach its aim through education and training, systemic analysis and dissemination of information regarding human rights, development of networks to combat violence, and national and international legal representation of individuals whose human rights have been violated. The website is in both English and Spanish. The center provides a daily review of human rights articles published in leading daily newspapers.

Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CMDPDH)

<http://www.laneta.apc.org/cmdpdh>

CMDPDH's mission is to promote the development of a state based on human rights. Their website provides links to statistics of human rights violations in Mexico, the human rights situation in Mexico to date, reports of the Commission, and others. This site is in Spanish only.

Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)

<http://www.cndh.org.mx/>

CNDH is a department of the Mexican government charged with responding to human rights complaints in Mexico. Their site has an electronic complaint form and contains information on the structure of the organization and its services.

Comite de America Latina y el Caribe para la defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (CLADEM)

<http://www.derechos.org/cladem/>

CLADEM is a network of women and women's organizations united in their efforts to defend women's rights in the Latin American/Caribbean region. The group does its work through investigating, enabling, litigating, teaching, informing, communicating, and carrying out solidarity actions. This site is in Spanish only.

Communicating Human Rights Internationally

http://www.utexas.edu/coc/rtf/chri/news_release.html

Site for the recent conference held at the University of Texas. The goal of the conference was to help clarify the meaning of human rights in a complex world and to plot strategies for communicating information about those rights in a fast-changing media world. This site is valuable for the insight and hope that it offers, as well as for the links, contacts, and biographies of some of the most respected human rights organizations in the world today.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.unicef.org/crc>

A complete compendium regarding children's rights, including related resource links.

Cultural Survival (CS)

<http://www.cs.org>

Cultural Survival is a nonprofit organization devoted to defending the human rights and cultural autonomy of indigenous peoples and oppressed ethnic minorities. The site offers online journals, information on CS projects and events, and sources of educational materials.

Derechos Human Rights

<http://www.derechos.org/>

Derechos is an Internet organization that works with human rights organizations around the world in the fight for respect of human rights. Its main objective is to distribute human rights information and it feels that the Internet is the best possible way to accomplish this. The site provides background about Derechos, human rights information, newsletters, appeals, online publications, groups hosted by Derechos, and links to other sites. The site is available in both English and Spanish and is fully searchable.

Desaparecidos

<http://www.desaparecidos.org/eng.html>

This website is a project of several human rights groups attempting to maintain the memory of and to pursue justice for those who have disappeared. This site currently provides information on people who have disappeared (arranged by country) and has links to a few human rights sites. The site is accessible in both English and Spanish.

Equipo Nizkor

<http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/>

Equipo Nizkor believes that the first step in the struggle against human rights violations is clear, precise, and timely information. This site provides access to reports, articles, and other information that the group hopes will help in the struggle against human rights abuses. Most of the information currently on the site is in Spanish and is searchable.

Frontera Norte/Sur

<http://www.nmsu.edu/~frontera/index.html>

Frontera Norte/Sur is an online monthly news digest published by the Center for Latin American Studies located at New Mexico State University. It covers news of north-central Mexico, with an emphasis on cross-border themes. It has recently begun its own staff-generated reports on issues of regional concern, including human rights, the environment, and politics. The group is preparing to extend its coverage into Baja California.

Global Exchange

<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/mexico/news052898.html>

This site provides the document *Restricting Human Rights Work in Mexico*. It also contains contact information for elected officials in both the United States and Mexico.

Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (IIDH)

<http://www.iidh.ed.cr>

IIDH is an international organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Americas. The site features information on the programs and activities of the institute related to human rights education, consolidation of democracy, political rights, strengthening of civil society, and assistance in human rights for public institutions. The site is available in both English and Spanish.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

<http://www.oas.org/EN/PINFO/OAS/CIDH.htm>

The commission is a part of the Organization of American States (OAS). Its principal function is to promote the observance and protection of human rights and to serve as a consultative organ of the OAS in human rights matters.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR)

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/iachr/iachr.html>

IACHR is an intergovernmental court protecting human rights in the Americas. The site has full-text versions of many documents related to the work of the court, including the Charter of the Organization of American States, human rights treaties and rules of procedure, advisory opinions, contentious cases, and resolutions. The site is available in English and Spanish.

Foro Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (FIDEH)

<http://www.udayton.edu/~fideh/>

FIDEH is committed to the idea that respect for human rights is the basis for democracy and the rule of law. FIDEH: fosters human rights education and the permanent exchange of information on human rights; contributes to national and international efforts to guarantee that human rights are fully respected; and encourages democratic participation. The site has an events calendar and links to other sites that focus on human rights issues. The site is available in English and Spanish.

Free Speech Internet Television

<http://www.freespeech.org>

The primary mission of Free Speech Internet Television is to provide free hosting for progressive, democratic media projects. It is the first audio/video hub on the web created by its members. Read the tutorials about posting your own "television show" or "talk radio" program. Explore the issues that people and groups from around the world have exposed, including human rights, immigration, and justice.

Latin American Federation of Associations for Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared (FEDEFAM)

<http://www.desaparecidos.org/fedefam/eng.html>

FEDEFAM is a nongovernmental organization formed by associations of relatives of people who have disappeared in the Latin American and Caribbean countries that have or are currently practicing forced disappearance. This site provides information in both English and Spanish about the organization, its mission, and their quarterly newsletter, *Hasta Encontrarlos*.

Liga Mexicana Por La Defensa De Los Derechos Humanos (LIMEDDH-FIDH)

<http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/mexico/limeddh/>

LIMEDDH is the Mexican branch of four international human rights organizations: The Federación Internacional de los Derechos Humanos (FIDH); The Network of World-wide Organizations Against Torture (OMCT/SOS-Tortura); The International Observatory of Prisons (OIP); and Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH). The website provides links to numerous documents, reports, and press releases concerning human rights.

Mexico Human Rights Network

<http://www.mhrn.org.uk>

This is a volunteer project based in London that works to inform and educate the public on issues of human rights in Mexico. The site is still under construction, but it currently provides access to human rights documents and links to other websites related to human rights issues.

Peace Brigades International (PBI)

<http://www.igc.apc.org/pbi/pbi-e.html>

PBI is a grassroots organization exploring and implementing nonviolent approaches to peacekeeping and support for basic human rights. PBI provides protective accompaniment for individuals and organizations that have been threatened by political violence or are otherwise at risk. The site provides information about individual projects, publications, and membership information. The site is available in German, French, Italian, Spanish, English, and Swedish.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)

<http://www.phrusa.org>

PHR members have worked to stop torture, disappearances, and political killings by governments and opposition groups; to improve health and sanitary conditions in prisons and detention centers; and to protect health professionals who are victims of human rights violations. PHR bases its actions on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The site provides valuable information about human rights education, training, research and investigations. The group also maintains a speaker's bureau.

Resource Center of the Americas (RCA)

<http://www.americas.org/>

RCA enables U.S. citizens to join the struggle for peace, justice, and human rights across the hemisphere. It provides educational resources, links individuals and grassroots groups across national borders, and reveals lopsided power relations within and between the Americas. The website provides information on events, a library, educational programs, periodicals, educational resources, membership information, and links to other sites. The site is available in Spanish and English.

Strategic Pastoral Action (SPAN)

<http://www.spanweb.org>

SPAN is "a social justice and human rights project that provides resources and the presence of solidarity with communities struggling against oppression, in the praxis of liberation theology and non-violence." The website provides numerous links to project reports, information about human rights violations in Latin America, and links to other websites.

Tlahui

<http://www.comnet.ca/~tlahuica/tlahui2/fmx0.htm>

Tlahui is an electronic semi-annual magazine. Issue number four provides extensive documentation of a wide range of human rights violations that have occurred in Mexico in recent time. Although it is dated 1997, this issue is still being updated. Tlahui provides articles in Spanish, French, and English.

Witness

<http://www.witness.org>

Witness promotes the innovative use of video technology in the fight for human rights. It provides guides for how to use a video camera for documentation purposes and a directory of videos produced by citizens around the world. Witness helps citizen groups document and present their videos to international human rights enforcement organizations.

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

<http://www.wola.org/>

WOLA promotes human rights, democracy, and social and economic justice in Latin America and the Caribbean and facilitates dialogue between governmental and nongovernmental agencies. Its magazine, *ENLACE*, will soon be available through the website in both English and Spanish.

Witness for Peace

<http://www.igc.apc.org/wfp/#mission>

Witness for Peace is a faith-based NGO whose main objective is to push for changes in U.S. policies that contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean. The site offers information updates, an emergency response network, publications, membership information, a resource center, and a photo gallery.

Publications

Sergio Aguayo, *Las Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de Derechos Humanos en Mexico: Entre la Democracia Participativa y la Electoral* (Mexico, D.F.: Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, 1997).

Amnesty International, Mexico: *Amnesty International's Concerns Regarding Torture and Ill-Treatment in Mexico* (New York: Amnesty International USA, 1997).

John Ward Anderson, "In Mexico's Crime Wave, Police Often are the Cause, Not the Solution," *Washington Post*, September 30, 1997.

Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CEFPRODHAC), *1997: Un Año Más de Impunidad*, Informe Annual 1997/Reporte Especial (Reynosa, Tamaulipas: CEFPRODHAC, January 1997).

Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CEFPRODHAC), *La Justicia en Tamaulipas México*, Estudios Fronterizos: Análisis e Investigación (Reynosa, Tamaulipas: CEFPRODHAC, June 1998).

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Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (CEFPRODHAC), *Tortura en la Frontera de Tamaulipas*, Estudios Fronterizos: Análisis e Investigación vol.1 (Reynosa, Tamaulipas: CEFPRODHAC, January 1998).

Debbie Nathan, "Death Comes to the Border," *The Nation*, vol. 264, no.2, 1997.

Adolfo Ortega Zarazua, *Informe Especial: Cuatro Años de Acción en la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos: Abril 1993-Marzo 1997* (México, D.F.: Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 1997).

United States Department of State, *Mexico Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997* (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Affairs, 1998).

Christopher James Welna, *Explaining Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs): Human Rights NGOs and Institutions of Justice in Mexico*, Ph.D thesis (Duke University, 1997).

For Your Information**New Publication**

Guía de Acción para Ejercer sus Derechos para Presentar una Queja a la Secretaria de Trabajo y Previsión Social (STPS) (An Action Kit to Exercise your Right to File a Claim with the Ministry of Health and Safety).

Designed for workers in Mexico, this manual can be duplicated for use in other countries. For ordering or more information contact:

Marta Segura-Chirino, M.P.H.
Program Coordinator

HWWTP, Border Health and Safety Project
UCLA-Labor Occupation Safety and Health Program,
6350 B Public Policy Bldg.,

Box 951478,

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1478.

Email: msegura@ucla.edu

Document Available

A new report by the U.S. General Accounting Office *International Boundary and Water Commission: U.S. Operations Need More Financial Oversight*, NSAD-98-238 is available online at <http://www.gao.gov/new>

Second Annual Meeting on the Border Environment

April 22, 23, 24 1999

Tijuana, Baja California

Call for Workshop and Panel Proposals

Deadline for submission: Dec 4

The general focus for the upcoming conference is "Strategies and Solutions for the Border Environment." For detailed and updated information write to: bordenv@u.arizona.edu or visit the website at <http://w3.arizona.edu/~laac/bordconf.htm>

Call for Comments

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation is soliciting public comments on the revised Guidelines for Citizen Submissions on Enforcement Matters under Article 14 and 15 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. In order to facilitate this review, a revised version of the guidelines has been prepared indicating the modifications and additions to the text in bold characters. It can be found at <http://cec.org/english/citizen/Guide208>

Human Rights in Chihuahua

Headquartered in two cramped offices in Chihuahua City, the non-governmental Commission in Solidarity and Defense of Human Rights (COSYDDHAC) is one of the most active human rights organizations on the border. A recent report issued by the Roman Catholic Church-backed group, while supportive of state government efforts to end corruption, detailed several major areas of concern: the survival of Chihuahua's four indigenous peoples, the militarization of the Sierra Madre and border region, prison conditions, social violence, working conditions for maquiladora workers, and gay-bashing.

The Sierra Flashpoint

Sprawling from the U.S. border in the north to the states of Durango and Sinaloa in the south, the vast, rugged Sierra Madre mountain chain has been one focal point for human rights violations committed by both government security forces and drug traffickers, who are reputed to sometimes force indigenous Tarahumara Indians to plant illegal drug crops. Beginning in 1976, the Mexican government's Operation Condor established the army here in a new, aggressive police mode. Indigenous residents of the Sierra blamed soldiers for carrying out robberies, beatings, and murders in the course of their antidrug raids.

More recently, the Sierra has undergone a new round of militarization. Since 1995, army checkpoints have been erected on highways, and soldiers have conducted training exercises in the streets of some small villages. The deployments occur in the context of heightened violence related to control of the lucrative drug trade in northern Mexico and armed revolts in southern Mexico. These deployments stem from federal legislation (passed in 1995 and 1996) that permits greater coordination of police-military efforts and rubber-stamps the authority of the security forces to engage in increased surveillance. Roman Catholic Bishop José Dibilox of the Tarahumara Diocese has repeatedly denounced the checkpoints for their anticonstitutional nature, but his criticisms have had little impact on policy-makers.

In the view of COSYDDHAC staffer Erik Urizar, the army's activities outside their barracks in Chihuahua (as well as in the rest of Mexico) constitute a worrisome

trend that comes at the expense of hard-won gains in the recognition of social and political rights. "The historic role the Mexican Army played is being changed," commented Urizar. "In this case there are rumors that members of the army itself are not in agreement with this new role that is being assigned to them. Unlike the rest of Latin American armies, the Mexican Army has historically been accepted and viewed well by the majority of the population."

Popular support for the army, however, is wearing thin among some sectors in the Sierra. In both 1996 and 1998, military personnel were involved in the murders of two residents. In the first instance, witnesses reported seeing soldiers on an anti-drug mission in October 1996 abduct Valentin Carrillo, a young Tepehuan man who resided in the remote southwestern corner of Chihuahua. Carrillo's tortured body was later discovered by neighbors. In the latest instance, two soldiers were detained in August 1998 after killing Mirey Trueba in the small town of Barborigame. The youth was shot in the back after he reportedly panicked and tried to flee.

Despite the demands of family members that the military perpetrators in both cases be tried in civilian courts, authorities of the armed forces have insisted that the suspects be judged by military tribunals. "This is a typical case of the difficulties citizens have in the face of crimes that military personnel commit," charged COSYDDHAC attorney Rosa María Espinosa in reference to the Carrillo slaying. "An important aspect of the work of NGOs in the country is to have access to information about military trials. Since we don't have access, we don't know if the whole process will develop into impunity. Military personnel also evade the obligation of repairing the damage to families, in this case the family of Valentin Carrillo, who was murdered."

In March 1998 the Organization of American States Interamerican Human Rights Commission (CIDH) accepted COSYDDHAC's petition to hear the Carrillo case. Meanwhile, the Trueba killing has reignited outrage in the Sierra. According to the *Diario de Chihuahua* newspaper, hundreds of residents of the municipality of Guadalupe de Calvo are demanding that the army pull back. At the same time, Chihuahua legislators have publicly denounced Trueba's murder.

A Broad Militarization

The stepped-up military presence in the Sierra Tarahumara is just one part of a larger militarization under way in Mexico's largest state. In a temporary 1995 pilot program, the federal government replaced dozens of agents assigned to the Attorney General of the Republic (PGR) with active-duty soldiers. And in 1997, the Chihuahua press reported the stationing of a special, antiterrorist unit of the Mexican Army, GAFE, in Ciudad Juárez. Officially, the soldiers' purpose was to curb drug and arms trafficking. But to date there is little evidence—if any—that the emergency programs have resulted in the intended accomplishments. Instead, Ciudad Juárez has been wracked with an on-again, off-again narco war since last year. Dozens of bodies—tortured, strangled, or shot—have been found in automobile trunks, motel rooms, and public streets. "Despite the PGR being militarized, the problem of murders and drug trafficking remain as strong as prior to the militarization," contended COSYDDHAC's Urizar.

Ominously, the killings spread in 1998 from big-city Juárez to small communities in the countryside. Likewise, Ciudad Juárez boasts the grim distinction of being one of the world's cities with the greatest number of reported forced disappearances. Since 1994, about 100 residents have vanished, many after reportedly being detained by armed men bearing police credentials. In a May 1998 report, Amnesty International said: "The impunity granted to perpetrators is a chilling complement to the rise in the egregious practice of disappearances. The organization is concerned that the victims have no effective recourse before the law to seek redress."

Some of the earliest disappearances coincide with the heyday in the city of the federal government's National Institute to Combat Drugs (INCD), which was later dismantled after the arrest of its director, General Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, for maintaining ties to the head of the Juárez drug cartel.

An Official View

Enjoying autonomy from the governor's office, the official Chihuahua State Human Rights Commission (CEDH) handles cases ranging from the domestic abuse of women and children to situations

like the May 1997 Monterde incident, in which indigenous protesters from a forest *ejido* were brutally beaten by state and municipal police in the streets of Chihuahua City. Like the national and other state human rights commissions, the CEDH has the power to interview witnesses, gather evidence, and issue non-binding recommendations. Although the recommendations can be ignored—especially in politically sensitive situations—the CEDH serves to legitimize human rights struggles. Currently, the CEDH functions on an annual budget of about \$300,000 dollars, supporting a staff of 20 and three part-time investigators in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua City.

In a recent interview with *borderlines*, CEDH President Heliodoro Juárez assessed what he considered both the advances and setbacks for human rights in his state. On the positive side, Juárez stated that public outrage at police torture, while not eliminating the problem, has managed to reduce a once-systematic practice to one that is less frequent than in the past. Two negative areas, he noted, were the Monterde case and the killings of women in Ciudad Juárez.

A CEDH investigation of the Monterde incident determined that State Judicial Police Chief Heriberto Lachicha and three low-ranking officers had committed violations of protesters' rights. Although then-Chihuahua Governor Francisco Barrio partially accepted the CEDH's recommendations that the responsible police be sanctioned (two municipal police were handed written reprimands and one PJE officer was given a 15-day suspension), he did not fire Lachicha as requested by the human rights commission. "This appeared to us as a joke and ridiculous on the part of the authorities," remarked Juárez. "Fortunately, there were no deaths, but 15 days after the incident there were five indigenous people in the hospital."

Murders of Women Continue in Ciudad Juárez

Along the entire length of the border, women's groups and society-at-large have reacted with horror to the murders of more than 130 young women in Ciudad Juárez since 1993. Many of the victims have been maquiladora workers who mysteriously vanished, only to later turn up on the city's desert outskirts after being raped, tortured, and murdered. (In the estimate of CEDH Chief Juárez, about 100 of the Ciudad Juárez murders share the

characteristics of serial or sexual violence.) The grisly discoveries have inspired protest marches and hunger strikes—as well as the intervention of state legislators and the federal government's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH)—and have caught the attention of international human rights organizations like Amnesty International.

rights activists is often wrongly perceived as consisting of the defense of delinquents. And even as Chihuahua human rights activists have raised the voices of the voiceless, they themselves have not been immune to persecution.

In the wake of the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, for instance, articles in the Mexican yellow press falsely

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Activists have raised questions regarding the effectiveness and intensity of investigations into the murders. CEDH chief Juárez is also highly critical of previous police investigations. Of 36 cases reviewed by the CNDH in 1996-97, Juárez said, the national commission detected grave deficiencies in 34 of the investigations. He charged that there is very little proof against one of the detained suspects (an Egyptian-born U.S. resident, Sharif Abdel Latif Sharif), and that very little has been done to get to the bottom of the crimes.

Indeed, the killings continued after Sharif's arrest. Later, police arrested members of a local gang for involvement in the murders, but at least one member claims he confessed only after being beaten by police. Comments like those of the state governor that the deaths are within the range to be expected in a city the size of Juárez have inspired charges of official indifference. Some police officials have even gone as far as to claim that the victims were in part to blame, as many of them have disappeared from nightclubs frequented by the border's newly-independent female maquiladora workers.

Barriers to Advocacy

Given the explosion of crime and public insecurity in Chihuahua, Chief Juárez pointed out, the work of human

accused COSYDDHAC of having links to the guerrillas. Two years later, COSYDDHAC founder Father Daniel Camilo Perez was subjected to an ongoing series of threats. According to current COSYDDHAC President Francisca Jiménez, the priest began receiving intimidating, anonymous phone calls in 1996. Shady-looking strangers in cars were seen outside his office. Soon, Camilo's personal secretary had members of her family threatened. Next, their office was burglarized. In May 1998, the secretary's car burned up and a fire broke out in a warehouse near the office. The Chihuahua state government has since agreed to post police protection outside Father Camilo's office. COSYDDHAC wants the security to be permanent.

The dedication and hard work of groups like COSYDDHAC do pay off with victories, despite intimidation and other barriers to advocacy. Late last year COSYDDHAC announced that, under pressure from grassroots and international human rights organizations, Chihuahua Governor Francisco Barrio agreed to form a special task force to investigate the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez. Barrios also committed to the creation of a mechanism by which NGOs, including a special watchdog committee formed to monitor the task force, will be allowed to oversee the investigative process. ■

Antonio García Sanchez, of Baja California's *Procuradía de los Derechos Humanos*, a state human rights agency:

One of the principal functions the law establishes for us is to investigate citizen complaints against illegal or arbitrary acts by public servants. We also inspect penitentiaries, preventive prisons, and Minor Counseling Centers, and we have the power to enter the offices of the authorities and to interview functionaries in search of the facts. We have the power to propose conciliatory solutions to the problems presented to us, or can emit documents, known as Recommendations, which not only levy sanctions against responsible public servants but which also call for implementing administrative measures in order to resolve problems.

We also have the function of developing programs of education, so that the community knows its rights. In Tijuana, the Municipal Police Training Institute program has begun using human rights materials, and our lawyers are there for two months with students training to be police officers. Also at the level of Judicial Police, we teach a concept of human rights based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the minimum regulations that the UN has justified for use of arms by police bodies, and the "ten commandments" that public servants who are responsible for ensuring public compliance with the law should follow. This has been an important experience—but in my opinion has not been sufficient to modify the conduct of police bodies. But it is an advance.

The problem is that such efforts must be permanent, constant and ever stronger, so that abuse by the authorities is eliminated—not as a result of citizen complaints, or because of sanctions that are imposed, but because of the natural,

regular manner in which the authorities honor their responsibilities and avoid the abuse of their authority.

Amelia Costa Morales, *Centro Apoyo del Migrante*:

Often, human rights violations on the border are committed against migrants by U.S. authorities. But for me what is most upsetting is to see that Mexican authorities also abuse the most unprotected, that different police units act in an arbitrary manner toward our co-nationals, some of them belonging to well organized bands who traffic in migrant workers.

The Migrant Support Center promotes respect for social, labor, and human rights of migrant workers and their families. We provide support in various ways: creating networks of communication between the worker who emigrates and the family which stays in Mexican territory, with the goal of preventing family disintegration, and by working with public and private national and international organizations to promote respect for the rights of migrants. The biggest problems we face are the lack of response and collaboration on behalf of the authorities on both sides, and the enormous network of *pateros* that has grown greatly in the past years.

We have had cases of people who had made a deal with the coyotes to cross to the U.S., but once in U.S. territory, are kidnapped. The coyotes lock up the migrants and extort money from family members in the north. The cases that we have been recording have occurred in U.S. territory. On some occasions—with not Mexican but rather Central American migrants—the same has happened on the Mexican side, in Matamoros. Again it is a type of kidnapping: the *pateros* have these people

in the palm of their hand, and these individuals obviously must obey and do all that the coyote is ordering them to do.

Teresa Guerrero, of the *Commission in Solidarity and Defense of Human Rights, A.C. (COSYDDHAC)*:

The human rights situation in northern Mexico has deteriorated in recent years. As a border state, Chihuahua has been affected by the Zedillo administration's policy of militarization. This policy has seen the utilization of members of the army in civil capacities within the PGR and the Federal Judicial Police, and the use of the military in public security capacities. The justification for this policy of militarization is that it is designed to combat drug smuggling, arms traffic, and migration. However, the policy doesn't tend to eradicate those problems, but on the contrary has permitted a sort of street violence that wasn't seen before.

Founded in 1988, COSYDDHAC, seeks to promote the defense of human rights in Chihuahua, giving special attention to the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Madre. Our core activities are popular education with the goal of community self-empowerment and providing legal aide to the victims of legal rights violations. It's essential for us that citizens know their rights to organize and defend themselves—that's the only way that we as a society will be able to make the rule of law mean something in our country.

Unfortunately, on one hand the government uses the language of human rights in a demagogic public relations discourse, while on the other hand implements campaigns to disparage and threaten human rights defenders and also undertakes actions that undermine the rights of Mexican citizens. ■

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