



A Dangerous Journey through Mexico: Human Rights Violations against Migrants in Transit

By Maureen Meyer, with contributions from Stephanie Brewerⁱ

Introduction

On August 25, 2010, an Ecuadorian migrant approached a military checkpoint in the northern Mexican state of Tamaulipas and told the soldiers that he had escaped from a ranch where he and many other migrants had been kidnapped by a group of armed men who said that they were part of the *Zetas*, one of Mexico's most brutal drug trafficking organizations. A gun battle ensued with the kidnappers when the marines arrived at the ranch, leaving three of the assailants and one

marine dead. The group of soldiers then made a gruesome discovery: the bodies of 72 migrants, 58 men and 14 women, who had been executed by their abductors reportedly for refusing to join the ranks of the criminal group. The discovery of the bodies of the 72 migrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas shocked Mexicans and the international community, but sadly this case is just one example of the risks faced by migrants in transit in Mexico. For years, organizations and shelters in Mexico have documented the abuses suffered by migrants traveling through the country. Every day along the

ⁱ Maureen Meyer is the Senior Associate for Mexico and Central America at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). Stephanie Brewer is the Coordinator of the International Area at the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Center Prodh).

principal transit routes, migrants, primarily Central Americans, are beaten, extorted, sexually abused and/or kidnapped by criminal groups, at times with the direct participation or acquiescence of Mexican authorities.

The journey of most migrants to the United States is not easy. For residents of South and Central America it usually involves traveling through several countries, particularly Mexico, before reaching the U.S.-Mexico border which represents the last stage of a treacherous and harrowing journey. Because of their undocumented status, migrants traveling through Mexico have long been subject to abuse by criminal groups and Mexican authorities. In recent years, the expansion of organized crimi-

nal groups in Mexico has added one additional layer of danger to the trip. Migrant shelters, civil society organizations, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, CNDH*) and others have witnessed and documented how the kidnapping of migrants is on the rise in the country. Despite warnings about the humanitarian crisis facing migrants in transit, the Mexican government has been slow to act to protect this vulnerable population and investigate those responsible for these abuses, including their own immigration and police agents.

This report analyzes the rise in kidnappings of migrants who travel through Mexico and the apparent indifference of the Mexican government

Principal routes taken by Central American migrants travelling through Mexico 2001 - 2005



Credit: Amnesty International (based on a map by Rodolfo Casillas)

to address the multiple abuses they suffer. It also examines the initiatives launched by the Mexican government in the aftermath of the massacre of the migrants in Tamaulipas which, if fully implemented, would lay the groundwork for greater protection of migrants in the country. As a way to give voice to the migrants who are victims of these abuses, the report includes testimonies of migrants in transit through Mexico who were kidnapped by organized criminal groups, often working in collusion with migration authorities and Mexican police agents. They are excerpts of some of the roughly 60 testimonies of kidnapped migrants compiled in recent years by the migrants' rights organizations Border with Justice and Humanity Without Borders that work in the migrants' shelter Belen, in Saltillo, Coahuila, located along the migration route.ⁱ

Easy Money: the Kidnapping of Migrants in Mexico

*"There are witnesses who have seen 100 people kidnapped in the same house! All of the neighbors have seen them and no one says anything. This will keep happening to all of those who arrive. No one wants to hear them."*ⁱⁱ

While migrants in transit have long been subject to abuse by criminal groups as well as Mexican authorities, the situation has worsened in recent years, particularly due to the increasing presence and power of organized criminal groups operating in the regions that serve as transit routes for migrants.

In 2009, the CNDH issued a special report on the kidnappings of migrants.ⁱⁱⁱ The report draws on information provided by the Human Mobility Pastoral of the Mexican Episcopal Conference, migrants' shelters that are part of the National Registration Network for Attacks on Migrants,^{iv} testimonies gathered by the CNDH directly, and media reports. It states that from September 2008 until February 2009, 9,758 migrants were victims of kidnapping in Mexico. Over half of these cases were in the states of Tabasco and Veracruz. The CNDH affirms that organized gangs directly perpetrated 9,194 of these kidnappings.

Although migrants might be considered an improbable target for kidnapping, their undocumented status in Mexico, the limited number of routes they take to travel through Mexico – mainly determined by the train routes, which tend to coincide with territories for which drug cartels are battling – their easy identification, and their high numbers make them an attractive target for organized criminal groups. The cases studied by the CNDH found that migrants were charged \$2,500 on average for their release, leading the Commission to estimate that criminal groups earned approximately \$25 million dollars from the migrants they kidnapped in the six month period covered in the report.^v

While the tactics differ, testimonies have illustrated that many migrants are targeted while traveling on the train or walking on the train tracks. At times they are tricked into going with someone who alleges that he/she is a human smuggler that can take them to the U.S. border, or who appears to be offering them humanitarian assistance; in other cases they are taken by force. In almost all circumstances the migrants are brought to buildings or structures often termed "safe houses" (a misnomer that refers to hideouts of organized crime groups) where they are held under strict surveillance. They are frequently beaten, poorly fed, and suffer numerous other abuses. The migrants are asked for the phone numbers of family members, mainly in the United States, so that the kidnappers can contact them and demand ransom. They remain in these houses until their family members can wire money to pay for their release; a few are able to escape. Those that do not have family members to call or who cannot pay are often brutally tortured and sometimes killed; others end up working for the kidnappers as a way to secure their release.^{vi}

While all kidnapped migrants suffer abuse, the situation of women migrants is particularly dire. It is estimated that at minimum six out of every 10 women migrants in transit are raped while traveling in Mexico.^{vii} Many women are also co-opted by organized criminal groups for sexual exploitation and prostitution.

The migrant shelters along the transit route that offer humanitarian assistance to migrants have increasingly reported that organized criminal groups

Nancy, 24 years old, Salvadoran

My name is Nancy, I am Salvadoran and I was kidnapped from April 13 to June 22, 2009. I was in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, staying in the supposed shelter of a woman nicknamed “the mother” who tried to pass for a nun so that we would trust her and fall into her trap. Some large trucks arrived there that were like moving vans and they grabbed me and 83 others... They took us up to Reynosa, in the state of Tamaulipas, and on the road we passed checkpoints of the National Migration Institute and Federal Police who saw how we were traveling and even so they did nothing, they merely took the money that was given to them as a bribe to keep silent. The kidnapers told us to pay attention so that we would see that they had paid for everything. One of the men began to bother us women and sexually abuse us. Then, one of our male companions got angry and tried to defend us, but he couldn’t because they raped him too and then they beat him to death...

Two of the women with me were released because they were able to pay the ransom so they turned themselves in to the migration agents in Reynosa. They told the agents everything that had happened and then the agents themselves sold the women back to the Zetas. They came to the house and then they were killed and their bodies were placed as an offering on the altar of the Santa Muerte (Saint Death). The kidnapers made all of us kneel in front of the altar with the two women’s bodies there to ask for forgiveness from the Santa Muerte.

During all of this time, three Mexican men, who were the bosses, would often come to look for the women that were there so that they could sexually abuse us. The three of them raped me several times. They also proposed that I work for them. They told me that I should go to El Salvador and bring people to them, that nothing would happen to me because they had worked everything out. First I told them yes as a way to be set free and to be able to lodge a complaint, but later I got scared and I told them no. So then I had to wait for my aunt to be able to get the money together so that I could be released. Fifteen days after she deposited the money that they asked for, they set me free...

attempt to take migrants directly from the shelters and that there are often individuals hanging around outside of the shelters who are scouting out their next victims. In 2009, the Catholic Church opened a Migrant Center in Palenque, Chiapas. Shortly after its opening the center was forced to close because of “constant attacks by organized criminal groups, who on several occasions went into the shelter and took the migrants who were staying there.”^{viii} In 2010, staff members of migrant shelters in several states were subject to physical assaults and threats by individuals believed to be linked to migrant trafficking or kidnapping rings operating in the areas near the shelters.^{ix}

In March 2010, several Mexican organizations that work to protect migrants’ rights requested a hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on the kidnappings of migrants in Mexico.^x The report that these groups

submitted to the Commission states that many kidnapping victims point to the involvement of organized criminal groups, particularly the *Zetas*, in the crimes. This criminal organization, which was once the enforcer arm of the Gulf drug trafficking organization and is now considered a main player in the drug trade in Mexico in its own right, “has begun to operate in most of the territory that the migrants transit on their route that begins at Mexico’s southern border and which follows the train route throughout the country.”^{xi}

Migration Policy in Mexico

One factor that has contributed to the increased vulnerability of migrants in transit has been Mexican policies that have increasingly addressed migration as a security issue. In 2005, Mexico’s National Immigration Institute (*Instituto Nacional de*

Migración, INM) became part of the country's National Security Council and in these last five years, the Mexican government has adopted several measures to strengthen border controls along the Mexico-Guatemala-Belize border. In essence, Mexico serves as the first filter that many undocumented migrants must go through as a way to reduce immigration to the United States. Mexican authorities estimate that approximately 171,000 migrants cross Mexico's southern border on their way to the United States every year; 95% of these migrants are from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. In 2009, the National Immigration Institute detained 65,134 migrants in transit in Mexico.^{xiii} Of these detainees, 60,134 were voluntarily repatriated or deported.^{xiii}

Given the geographic difficulties in patrolling Mexico's over 700 mile long southern border, the government has also established immigration checkpoints throughout the country – what many call a “vertical border” – particularly along roads and the railways that many migrants use to cross Mexico. Because of these checkpoints, many migrants opt to travel off the beaten path in isolated areas, making them more vulnerable to criminal groups. Their known presence on the railway also makes them easy targets for abuses including kidnapping, robbery, sexual assault, human trafficking and murder.

In 2008, Mexico reformed its General Population Law so that violations of the immigration statute – such as illegally entering the country, falsifying documents, or overstaying one's visa – are no longer criminal offenses; they are now considered administrative offenses punishable by fines and voluntary repatriation or deportation.^{xiv} This means that despite being decriminalized, migrants are still routinely detained in Mexico's migration stations. In September 2010, shortly after the massacre of the 72 migrants, the Mexican government passed reforms to this same law that remove the requirement for federal, state and local authorities to verify an individual's legal status before they are able to attend to requests such as processing reports of crimes or providing migrants with medical treatment (although its language leaves in place the possibility for such authorities to obtain

and act on information about the person's migratory status, making its ultimate impact unclear). Various proposals by Mexican political parties to create an Immigration Law that is separate from the General Population Law are in discussion and should be considered in the coming months by the Mexican Congress.

Human Rights Violations by Mexican State Agents Against Migrants

According to the CNDH, while organized criminal groups are primarily responsible for criminal acts against migrants, “the participation of Mexican authorities in the kidnapping of at least 91 migrants reveals the complicity between criminal groups and some state agents.”^{xv} In 99 other cases referenced in the CNDH's report, the migrants mentioned that while they were being held captive, they were aware that the police were in contact with the kidnappers.^{xvi}

In the report based on his visit to Mexico in 2008, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Jorge Bustamante, also points to a systematic tolerance by government authorities of these crimes against migrants, stating that, “[t]ransnational migration continues to be a business in Mexico, largely operated by transnational gang networks involved in smuggling and trafficking in persons and drugs, with the collaboration of the local, municipal, state and federal authorities... With the pervasiveness of corruption at all levels of government and the close relationship that many authorities have with gang networks, incidences of extortion, rape and assault of migrants continue.”^{xvii}

In an interview following the murder of the 72 migrants in Tamaulipas, Mauricio Farah, who coordinated the CNDH's report on migrants, also commented on the complicity of several Mexican authorities along the migration route, stating that “forty, 80, 100 migrants inside trucks or on the trains cannot pass unnoticed by the authorities... on the contrary what happens is that they are in collusion with drug gangs.”^{xviii}

New Actions by the Mexican Government

As a result of the March hearing held before the IACHR on the kidnapping of migrants in transit, the Mexican government submitted a report to the Commission in July 2010 on the kidnapping, extortion and other crimes committed against migrants traveling in Mexico. This report includes details on

Mexican legislation that protects migrants, the different levels of government coordination regarding migration, and government programs to protect migrants.

An examination of the report suggests some concerning aspects of how the Mexican government is currently addressing the situation of migrants in transit in the country. For example, the

Jesus Guevara, 29 years old, Salvadoran

On July 12, 2009, I was traveling on the train from Orizaba, Veracruz, with sixteen other Central American companions when we were all kidnapped. Eight men arrived at the train, took us off and beat us; my head and my chest were hit with a gun. There were six Federal Police agents in their patrol cars close by and they didn't do anything; actually the kidnapers told us to observe how the police "were their cats," we yelled to the police and asked them to help us but they didn't do anything. Afterward we were put in a small white truck and we drove for about 40 minutes until we arrived at a house in an unpopulated area. All the way there we were beaten, yelled at, and insulted.

The house we were taken to was very isolated, it was made out of wood, there were no bathrooms, it had a well. From the time we arrived there was a bad odor that smelled like dead animals. There was blood all over the house and a lot of flies; there were about 30 of us who had been kidnapped, six were women and they suffered a lot because after our arrival the kidnapers would rape them whenever they wanted, always in front of all of us.

There were migrants who had been inside the house for days or weeks. Some didn't have fingers or toes and some of them didn't have hands or arms. The kidnapers had cut them off because their families didn't respond to the requests for money or they couldn't pay. I can say that the kidnapers had no respect for age because there were about five kids who were 15 years old and they had had their fingers cut off. The poor guys suffered all of the time and at night they cried a lot because they had a fever and they were slowly bleeding to death. Although we couldn't get close to them because the kidnapers would beat us, I helped one of the kids, his name is Eduardo and he is Honduran. I think he is dead now because he had been kidnapped for about 15 days and he was really skinny; they had cut three of his fingers off, two from the right hand and one from the left. I gave him my bread when the kidnapers weren't looking...

During the day the kidnapers would bother us asking for telephone numbers and they beat us just for the pleasure of it. I didn't give them any phone numbers of my family because they don't have any money and I don't know anyone in the United States who could have helped me.

On the night of the third day we heard when the two guys who watched over us left and I said to the others that we should escape. They didn't want to at first but then they saw me take the lock off the door and we went out running. There were only five of us, others who wanted to escape lacked the strength to do so and others who had lost fingers or toes also couldn't escape.

report questions the methodology used by the CNDH to report on the number of kidnappings of migrants in Mexico, concluding that “the Mexican government needs to have a comprehensive methodology that allows it to better understand the dimension of the problem of the kidnapping of migrants and observe its evolution over time in order to improve the development of the Mexican government’s public policies.”^{xix} While having accurate numbers is certainly important, the lack of exact information should not be an excuse for insufficient government actions. More concerning is the evident failure by the government to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for kidnapping migrants. The Mexican government’s report states that from January 2008 to April 2010, it registered 141 cases of kidnapped migrants, but that only two people have been sentenced for a crime. Apart from the systemic failure of Mexico’s judicial system to investigate and prosecute crimes effectively, this points to the government’s apparent lack of interest in investigating those responsible for committing abuses against migrants.

One week after the murder of the 72 migrants in Tamaulipas, Mexico’s Minister of the Interior, Francisco Blake, announced the Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent and Combat the Kidnappings of Migrants of Mexico. This strategy has five areas of action: signing agreements to coordinate actions among federal government agencies and the states; implementing an operational plan to dismantle kidnapping rings; a communications strategy to inform migrants of the risks faced in Mexico and their rights in Mexico and to encourage them to lodge complaints; plans to detain kidnapers and put together preliminary investigations; and providing special attention to victims. If fully implemented, this plan would better address the plight of migrants in Mexico, especially if it leads to more investigations and prosecutions of individuals



PHOTO BY: VANESSA GARCÍA BLANCA

and state agents responsible for committing abuses against them. The impunity that has prevailed for crimes against migrants in transit and the failure to address corruption effectively within Mexican government agencies has greatly increased the risks faced by migrants as they travel through the country. Migrants and their advocates continue to await signs of the effective implementation of this plan.

Addressing the Different Stages of Migration

While U.S. policy discussions on migration tend to focus on border control and how to better manage the estimated 11.1 million unauthorized migrants already residing in the country, little is said about the economic and social factors that force many individuals to leave their homes in search of better opportunities in the United States and the policy changes that are needed to promote economic development in the sending countries so that migration becomes an option, not a necessity.^{xx}

The economic reality and high levels of poverty in many countries, including Latin American countries, mean that at least in the short term hundreds

Cristian García, 20 years old, Salvadoran

They kidnapped me in January 2008. I was in the Migrants' Shelter in Reynosa, state of Tamaulipas and after I left, I went to the Rio Grande to try to cross. There, two Mexican men told me that they would take me across for 100 dollars. I told them no, because I didn't have any money, so they grabbed me, beat me and threw me in a truck that took me to someone's house. There, they spent all their time abusing women, that is, raping them, and beating all of us, men and women, with a really thick wooden board. There were people there from everywhere: from Brazil, Peru, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. There was one guy that seemed to be the boss, but he was ordered around by four other guys that came in big trucks, with nice phones, guns, and bodyguards. Whenever they showed up, they beat us just to beat us. They used a really wide wooden board that had the Mexican flag painted on it that said "Remember me" so that we wouldn't forget what we went through there.

Of course we will never forget, because we saw things that we never expected to see, like when one guy tried to escape, and they caught him and put him in a barrel for a week and then they threw him out, barrel and all, to who knows where. No one saw him again.

I was in that house for four months, watching lots of people pass through, with an average of around 100 people at any given time. Those who paid were allowed to watch TV and eat twice a day. The rest of us who didn't have money only ate once a day, and not even every day, just when the kidnappers felt like it. One day, they suddenly let me go; just telling me to go away, they took me to the Rio Grande. I am willing to tell the authorities where the house is, because I remember it well, and because I have sisters and it's not right to do what they did to women in that place.

of thousands of people will continue to be driven each year to migrate to the United States, mostly for economic reasons. Therefore, as the experience of migrants in transit in Mexico illustrates, more attention needs to be placed not only on the factors driving migration but also on the journey itself, a journey that in Mexico's case is considered by Amnesty International to be one of the most dangerous in the world. In its 2010 report on the situation of migrants in Mexico, Amnesty International found that some migrants who had been kidnapped and survived "were so traumatized by their experiences that they had voluntarily handed themselves over to the INM to be deported rather than risk falling into the hands of criminal gangs again."^{xxi}

Although this report focuses on actions by the Mexican government, in no way does this reduce the responsibility of the governments of source

countries, particularly in Central America, to create jobs and promote local development opportunities, apart from better protecting their citizens abroad and raising more awareness among the population of the risks of migration to the U.S. Nor does it diminish the need for the U.S. government to implement immigration reform and closely examine the impact of U.S. border security policies on the safety of migrants crossing into the country. More also needs to be done to address the multiple dynamics of migration at the regional level, including the increased targeting of migrants in transit as potential victims of the illicit activities of organized criminal groups.^{xxii}

Conclusions and Recommendations

The massacre of the 72 migrants in Tamaulipas prompted the Mexican government to adopt measures and propose programs to address the abuses suffered by migrants in Mexico and to enhance their protection. As was discussed previously, these include the design of the Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent and Combat the Kidnappings of Migrants in Mexico and reforms to the General Population Law and its secondary law that remove the requirement for government authorities to verify an individual's legal status before providing them with any type of assistance. The full enactment of the comprehensive strategy, particularly if it leads to more prosecutions of those responsible for abusing migrants, would be an important step to ensuring the safety of migrants in transit. Another element to address the violence suffered by migrants would be to improve protection and complaint mechanisms for migrants who have been abused. Likewise, the reforms to the General Population Law need to go beyond legal changes on paper and be implemented fully so that migrants who are victims of a crime can report it without being subject to migration proceedings and so that they receive the protection they need.

Other actions that the Mexican government should adopt to improve the protection of migrants in transit include:

- Facilitating a visit to Mexico by the Inter-American Commission's Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrant Workers, Felipe González, who explicitly requested during the March 2010 hearing on this topic that the government allow him to visit the country this year to document the serious abuses against the migrant population and offer recommendations for how to improve the situation of migrants in transit in Mexico. The government and the IACHR are in discussions about a date for this visit in 2011. Apart from assisting in his visit, the Mexican government should fully implement any recommendations that may be made by the Rapporteur as a result of his analysis of the situation in Mexico.
- Adopting specific policies to address the involvement of drug-trafficking organizations in the kidnapping of migrants as an additional aspect of organized crime in Mexico.
- Expanding and improving mechanisms to combat corruption and increase accountability within Mexico's National Immigration Institute as well as federal, state, and local police corps.
- Criminally prosecuting and sanctioning authorities as well as third parties involved in kidnappings and other attacks against migrants. As in all realms of human rights violations, impunity for perpetrators is among the principal factors perpetuating abuses committed against migrants. In this regard, the full implementation of the reforms to Mexico's criminal justice system that were passed in 2008 would be an important factor to increasing the effectiveness of Mexico's judiciary to prosecute crimes and strengthening the rule of law in the country.

Although migrants make the conscious decision to migrate to the United States and other countries without the proper documents, no human being should be subject to the abuses that have occurred against migrants in Mexico and elsewhere, regardless of their legal status. Implementing mechanisms to prevent and prosecute these abuses is essential to ensure the safety of migrants as they travel in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families abroad.

Endnotes

Cover photo and photo on page 7 are courtesy of Vanessa García Blanca. Exposición Fotográfica “De Paso.”

- ⁱ Apart from the situation of migrants in transit through Mexico, it is important to note that U.S. border security policies in recent years have made it more difficult for undocumented migrants to cross independently into the United States, which has resulted in the need for the services of human smugglers and an increase in the price of passage. A study on border security done by the U.S. Congress states that “human smugglers coordinate with drug cartels, paying a few to use the cartel’s safe smuggling routes into the United States. There are also indications the cartels may be moving to diversify their criminal enterprises to include the increasingly lucrative human smuggling trade.” Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard confirmed during a 2009 congressional hearing that the drug trafficking organizations not only profit from drugs, weapons, and money laundering, but also from immigrant smuggling. From, “A Line in the Sand: Confronting the Threat at the Southwest Border,” Prepared by the Majority Staff of the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Investigations, 2006. http://www.house.gov/sites/members/tx10_mccaull/pdf/Investigaions-Border-Report.pdf and Josh Meyer, Drug Cartels Raise the Stakes on Human Smuggling, LA TIMES, March 23, 2009.
- ⁱⁱ Quote from Eduardo Ortiz, Fifth Visitaduria, Coatzacoalcos, National Human Rights Commission, in Edu Ponce, Toní Arnau and Eduaredo Soterias, *En el camino, México, la ruta de los migrantes que no importan*, RUIDO Photo and ElFaro.net, 2010, p. 91.
- ⁱⁱⁱ National Human Rights Commission, “Informe Especial de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos sobre los casos de secuestro en contra de migrantes.” June 15, 2009, www.cndh.org.mx/INFORMES/Especiales/infEspSecMigra.pdf.
- ^{iv} The following migrants’ shelters are included in this network: *Albergue Belén*, Tapachula, Chiapas; *Albergue Belén Posada del Migrante*, Saltillo, Coahuila; *Albergue Hogar de la Misericordia*, Arriaga, Chiapas; *Albergue Hermanos del Camino*, Ixtepec, Oaxaca; *Albergue Parroquial Guadalupano*, Tierra Blanca, Veracruz; *Casa Betania*, Mexicali, Baja California; *Casa de la Caridad Cristiana*, Cáritas, San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí; *Casa del Migrante*, Tijuana, Baja California; *Nazaret Casa del Migrante*, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas; *Parroquial de Cristo Crucificado*, Tenosique, Tabasco.
- ^v National Human Rights Commission, “Informe especial sobre los casos de secuestro en contra de migrantes,” June 15, 2009, www.cndh.org.mx/INFORMES/Especiales/infEspSecMigra.pdf, pp. 9, 12, 14.
- ^{vi} Belén, Posada del Migrante, Humanidad Sin Fronteras and Frontera con Justicia, “Quinto informe sobre la situación de los derechos humanos de las personas migrantes en tránsito por México,” Saltillo, Coahuila, May 2009.
- ^{vii} Amnesty International, “Invisible Victims, Migrants on the Move in Mexico,” AMR 41/014/2010, April 2010, p. 15.
- ^{viii} “Secuestros a personas migrantes centroamericanas en tránsito por México,” Document prepared for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in the context of the hearing held on March 22, 2010, Washington, DC., http://centroprodh.org.mx/centroprodh/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=46&lang=es, p. 26.
- ^{ix} See for example, Amnesty International Urgent Action 240/10, Migrants’ Rights Defender at Risk, regarding a case in the state of Oaxaca, November 16, 2010, and Amnesty International Urgent Action 277/09, More Action Needed - Migrants and Shelter Staff at Risk in Mexico, regarding a case in Coahuila, August 13, 2010.
- ^x The organizations that collaborated to prepare the report and the hearing were: Border with Justice (Coahuila); Humanity without Borders (Coahuila); Fray Juan de Larios Human Rights Center; Migrants’ Shelter “Brothers in the Path,” Ixtepec, Oaxaca; Human Mobility Pastoral of the Mexican Episcopal Conference; Jesuit Migrant Service México; Fray Matías de Córdoba Human Rights Center (Chiapas); Young Volunteer Jesuit Service; Shelter of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Reynosa, Tamaulipas; Guadalupano Shelter, Tierra Blanca, Veracruz; Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human

Rights Center (Center Prodh).

- ^{xi} “Secuestros a Personas Migrantes Centroamericanas en Tránsito por México,” Document prepared for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in the context of the hearing held on March 22, 2010, Washington, DC., http://centroprodh.org.mx/centroprodh/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=46&lang=es, p. 17.
- ^{xii} “Informe del Estado Mexicano sobre secuestro, extorsión y otros delitos cometidos contra personas migrantes en tránsito por territorio mexicano,” Government of Mexico, July 16, 2010, p. 12.
- ^{xiii} Amnesty International, “Invisible Victims, Migrants on the Move in Mexico,” AMR 41/014/2010, April 2010, p. 5.
- ^{xiv} Mexico has signed on to almost all international human rights instruments, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It has also ratified the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its accompanying Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. Mexico’s Constitution grants foreigners in Mexico important guarantees while they are in the country.
- ^{xv} National Human Rights Commission, “Informe Especial de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos sobre los casos de secuestro en contra de migrantes”, June 15, 2009, www.cndh.org.mx/INFORMES/Especiales/infEspSecMigra.pdf, p. 15.
- ^{xvi} CNDH, Op. Cit. p. 15.
- ^{xvii} Jorge Bustamante, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants,” Mission to Mexico (March 9-15, 2008), A/HRC/11/7/Add.2, March 24, 2009, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/alldocs.aspx?doc_id=15384, para. 65.
- ^{xviii} E. Eduardo Castillo, Car bomb explodes in Mexico where 72 bodies found, ASSOCIATED PRESS, August 27, 2010.
- ^{xix} “Informe del Estado Mexicano sobre secuestro, extorsión y otros delitos cometidos contra personas migrantes en tránsito por territorio mexicano,” July 16, 2010, p. 8. Unofficial translation.
- ^{xx} Of this population, 60% are Mexican and another 11.7% are from Central America. Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohen, “U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Flows Are Down Sharply Since Mid-Decade,” Pew Hispanic Center, September 1, 2010. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/126.pdf>
- ^{xxi} Amnesty International, Op. Cit., p. 11.
- ^{xxii} In this regard, the Mexican government hosted on October 8, 2010, a Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Organized Crime and the Security of Migrants in Mexico City with the participation of representatives of Central and South American governments, the United States, and the OAS. The declaration from this meeting underscores the importance of increased regional coordination to address transnational criminal groups’ actions against migrants. http://embamex.sre.gob.mx/guatemala/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=198:reunion-ministerial-sobre-delinuencia-organizada-transnacional-y-seguridad-de-los-migrantes&catid=29:octubre-2010&Itemid=117

About WOLA

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) is a nonprofit policy, research, and advocacy organization working to advance democracy, human rights, and social justice in Latin America and the Caribbean. Founded in 1974, WOLA plays a leading role in Washington policy debates about Latin America. WOLA facilitates dialogue between governmental and non-governmental actors, monitors the impact of policies and programs of governments and international organizations, and promotes alternatives through reporting, education, training, and advocacy.

Washington Office on Latin America
1666 Connecticut Avenue NW
Suite 400 | Washington, D.C. 20009
telephone: 202.797.2171 | facsimile: 202.797.2172
email: wola@wola.org | web: www.wola.org

About Center Prodh

The Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Center Prodh) was founded by the Jesuits in 1988 to defend the human rights of Mexico's most vulnerable residents and to build a more just, equitable and democratic society. Based in Mexico City, Center Prodh works to protect and promote human rights through the integral defense of paradigmatic cases; training programs for human rights defenders; international advocacy; and the publication of information on the human rights situation in Mexico. Among its current topics of work are citizen security and human rights, transitional justice, criminal justice reform, and economic, social and cultural rights.

Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, A.C.
Serapio Rendón No. 57-B | Col. San Rafael
Del. Cuauhtémoc, CP 06470 | Mexico, DF, Mexico
telephone: (5255) 5546 8217 | facsimile: (5255) 5546 8217 ext. 108
email: internacional@centroprodh.org.mx | web: www.centroprodh.org.mx

Acknowledgements: WOLA Executive Director Joy Olson, WOLA Program Director Geoff Thale and Center Prodh Director Luis Arriaga provided valuable comments and suggestions during the production of this report. Special appreciation is also extended to the migrants' rights organizations Frontera con Justicia, Humanidad Sin Fronteras, and the other organizations and migrants' shelters who participated in the March 2010 IACHR hearing on the kidnapping of migrants in Mexico for their contribution to cases and information for this report and for their invaluable work to address the needs of migrants in transit and to defend their human rights. WOLA Program Assistant Joseph Bateman assisted in the layout and the production of the report.

ISBN: 978-0-9844873-8-7

