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Programa de Asuntos Migratorios /



With the International Observation of SweFOR Mexico and Peace Brigades International-Mexico

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Joint Statement - Mexico: Harassment of journalists and migrant rights defenders in Chiapas

The signatory organisations express their deep concern over and the persistent climate of hostility and the recent increase in violence against migrants, journalists, and migrant rights defenders in the south east of Mexico. Human rights groups, journalists and organisations, particularly in the state of Chiapas and Tabasco, have faced a new wave of harassment by elements of the National Guard and the National Institute of Migration (INM).

Since 28 August 2021, the National Guard and the INM have carried out regular joint operations to stop the transit of migrants attempting to leave Chiapas due to delays in the resolution of their migration regularisation or refugee procedures. According to reports from organisations such as the [Collective for Observation and Monitoring of Human Rights in the Mexican Southeast \(COMDHSE\)](#), the operations have been carried out violently and without adequate protocols that respect the rights and dignity of migrants. Human rights defenders who accompany migrants in their demands for their rights have experienced new waves of harassment by Mexican authorities.

On 28 August 2021, a migrant caravan left Tapachula, Chiapas along with journalists, human rights defenders, and officials from the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH). On the way, human rights defenders and members of COMDHSE noticed that the caravan was being watched and followed by unknown persons in vehicles with tinted windows. At around 6 p.m., members of the National Guard blocked the passage of the human rights defenders, journalists and CNDH officials, preventing them from carrying out their work of documentation, observation and accompaniment. The response by the National Guard was disproportionate; there were approximately 50 INM, National Guard and army vehicles as well as vehicles with tinted windows carrying armed men dressed as civilians.

On 2 September 2021, INM officials obstructed the passage of cars that belong to COMDHSE and journalists in Mapastepec, who were there to document a migrant caravan. On 5 September,

COMDHSE documented a disproportionate joint operation carried out by anti-riot elements of the National Guard and INM in Huixtla. During the operation, which lasted more than eight hours, multiple violent and arbitrary detentions were carried out, during which human rights defenders were also assaulted by elements of the National Guard who used riot shields to push them.

The attacks, harassment and surveillance against those who defend the rights of migrants and, in particular, against members of COMDHSE are not new; in July 2021 several United Nations Special Rapporteurs [expressed](#) their concern about the harassment against the network of organisations in the first half of 2021. In 2019, Front Line Defenders, Programa de Asuntos Migratorios de la Universidad Iberoamericana Ciudad de México (PRAMI) and the Red Todos los Derechos para Todas y Todos (Red TDT) [investigated and denounced](#) the continuous threats faced by those who defend the rights of migrants, and the consequences that this has on the migrant population.

The signatory organisations remind the Mexican Government of its obligation to guarantee the personal integrity of all persons transiting through Mexican territory. They would also like to remind the Government of its commitment to safeguard the human rights of all persons migrating to or residing within the country, including foreigners, as recognised in the principles of the 2011 [Migration Law](#).

The undersigned organisations urge the Mexican authorities to recognise and allow migrant rights defenders, journalists and civil society organisations to carry out their human rights work, in particular the documentation of the migrant situation, and accompaniment of migrants, on the southern border of Mexico. These organisations condemn the harassment of migrant rights defenders in this area by elements of the national authorities, and believe they are being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful human rights work. They also call for the respect for the human rights of all persons transiting Mexican territory, recalling that migrating and requesting refuge is a right guaranteed in the Mexican Constitution and in the international instruments to which Mexico is a party.