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Human Rights Watch World Report 1998

MEXICO

Human Rights Developments

Although the Mexican government continued to pay rhetorical attention to human rights, serious violations and impunity remained the norm during 1997. Authorities failed to address human rights violations stemming from acute rural tensions, the army's confrontation with leftist guerrillas, and a much-needed but ill-designed campaign to fight organized and common crime. In case after case, Mexican officials refused to engage in constructive dialogue with Mexican and international human rights organizations, preferring to obfuscate or ignore human rights issues rather than offer workable solutions to well-documented problems. At the heart of many abuses lay Mexico's police and justice systems, which often functioned at the expense of, rather than in support of, human rights.

Despite the serious human rights violations that took place during the year, the country made important strides in expanding political rights. On July 6, Mexicans voted in mid-term elections, casting ballots in a poll historic in both procedure and outcome. The elections represented an important consolidation of the right of Mexicans to exercise their political freedoms. Mexican and international observers agreed that procedural irregularities were minimal, in contrast to previous elections. Electoral reforms instituted over recent years permitted much freer balloting; for the first time ever, for instance, the Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE) operated independently from the government, and IFE officials administered the elections fairly in most parts of the country. Contrary to the trend in the rest of Mexico, however, serious irregularities did take place in Chiapas. There, according to Civic Alliance Chiapas (Alianza Cívica Chiapas, ACC), a local branch of the national good-governance group, more than 150 voting booths were burned or robbed. Supporters of the leftist Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN), which launched an armed uprising in January 1994, and partisans of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI), who organized into armed groups in northern Chiapas, carried out the attacks.

The outcome of the vote sent a shock wave through Mexican politics, as the PRI lost control of the Chamber of Deputies, Mexico's lower house of congress, for the first time since the party was formed seven decades ago. The elections also resulted in opposition leaders assuming pivotal positions that had always before been occupied by members of the PRI, such as speaker of the Chamber of Deputies and mayor of Mexico City.

Though historic, the vote offered little hope of immediate improvements in the human rights situation, an outcome that would require the new congress to act as a counterbalance to the arbitrary actions of the traditionally authoritarian executive branch of government. Congress could, for instance, press state governors to end impunity for human rights violations, hold authorities accountable for abuses documented by the government's National Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CNDH), and require the executive to take meaningful action to end human rights violations and ensure that violators faced justice. At this writing, it is too soon to know if congress would assume such a role.

In addition to the advance constituted by the elections, Mexico deserved credit for the important role it played as one of eight countries leading a diplomatic effort to draft a convention banning anti-personnel landmines. Begun in October 1996, the negotiations, which eventually came to include eighty-nine countries, resulted in September in the signing of a convention on the total prohibition of anti-personnel landmines.

On the domestic front, however, Mexican officials took much less seriously the numerous and serious human rights problems that needed urgent attention. In rural Mexico, violence continued unabated. In April, Human Rights Watch issued findings covering Chiapas, Sinaloa, Guerrero, and Oaxaca states. A common feature of much rural violence was the misuse of the structures of government-prosecutors' offices, the police, and courts to harass real or perceived opponents of the ruling party, reinforcing victims' assumption that the justice system could not effectively and impartially mediate community conflicts stemming from political differences, economic rivalries, or religious discord. In Chiapas, for example, Human Rights Watch reported that while many of the assassinations, abductions, threats, and expulsions in rural Mexico were carried out by private individuals, government agents often facilitated such abusive acts, failed to prosecute the perpetrators, or appeared to use the judicial system to achieve partisan goals. Moreover, in many cases, officials participated directly in abuses.

Those problems remained serious throughout the year. In northern Chiapas, community conflict continued to lead to expulsions and murder. For instance, Juan López Jimenez, a leader of the pro-PRI armed group called Peace and Justice, was assassinated on June 15 in Sabánilla municipality. In what appeared to be a reprisal, four members of the opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD) were killed on June 22 and 23.

As this incident made clear, violence in the region was not one-sided. A pattern emerged, however, in which prosecutors and police frequently turned a blind eye toward abuses committed by government supporters but fiercely prosecuted alleged acts of violence committed by real or perceived government opponents. In a positive move, starting in May Chiapas state officials released at least twelve people who had been wrongly jailed in such circumstances. The detainees had gone on hunger strike in November 1996 to force government review of their cases. At this writing, others claiming to be wrongly detained are still in jail.

Serious human rights violations also continued to take place in the context of the government's fight against the leftist Popular Revolutionary Army (Ejército Popular Revolucionario, EPR), which first appeared in June 1996. In Guerrero state, Mexican human rights groups documented a series of abuses committed by the army and police in their zeal to combat the guerrillas. A July 1997 report by the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez," PRODH) found a pattern of army abuses consisting of "illegal searches, arbitrary detentions, physical torture, detentions beyond legally allowed limits, death threats, incommunicado detention in military barracks, and psychological torture that include simulated executions." Detainees were typically blindfolded, held incommunicado for periods of between several hours and several days, tortured, and interrogated about the EPR, then released or turned over to the public prosecutor's office. For instance, unidentified men took Magencio Abad Zeferino Domínguez, from Olinalá municipality, from his home on December 27, 1996, and questioned him

about the EPR. According to a report prepared by the Tlachinolln Human Rights Center of the Mountain (Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaa Tlachinolln), Zeferino was kept blindfolded during his entire detention and suffered torture consisting of near-drowning and electric shocks. His abductors moved him to several locations. In one of the detention centers where Zeferino was held, he encountered Luis Gonzaga Lara, another man from Olinal municipality who had been abducted on December 27 and questioned about the EPR. The unidentified men who interrogated Gonzaga told him, "See, why didn't you want to say who had painted the letters?"—a reference to an incident a week earlier in which soldiers arbitrarily detained him and questioned him about a political slogan painted on the wall of his house. It appeared, therefore, that the December 27 abductions of Gonzaga and Zeferino were carried out by security forces. Eventually, both men were released.

Such abuses also took place in Oaxaca state, another region where the EPR was active. In Loxichas, Mexican human rights groups tallied scores of arbitrary detentions, temporary "disappearances," and incidents of torture carried out in operations coordinated by the police and military. The crackdown began in August 1996, following an EPR attack in the region that was part of a coordinated assault by the guerrilla group in several states, and continues as of this writing. On August 4, for instance, Oaxaca state police detained and blindfolded Juanario Crispn Almarz Silva, from San Agustn Loxicha. According to the Fray Francisco Vitoria Human Rights Center (Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Francisco Vitoria"), he was beaten severely and interrogated about the EPR, then transported to a Mexico City prison. The following day, he was released without charge. Celerino Jimnez Almarz had not been so lucky. Police wounded him after breaking into his home in San Mateo Ro Hondo on April 24. According to his wife, Jimnez tried to flee, even though he had been wounded in the leg. His body was found two days later; police said he died in an armed confrontation.

Government officials also engaged in serious abuses under the guise of promoting the government's fight against illegal drugs. In May officials did so after someone stole half a ton of cocaine from the San Luis Ro Colorado, Sonora state, Office of the Federal Attorney General (Procuradura General de la Repblica, PGR). The drug had been confiscated from traffickers. Agents of the special anti-drug unit of the police detained Alberto Gmez Garca, one of the robbery suspects, on May 27, held him incommunicado, and moved him from location to location in Mexico, torturing him by methods including near-suffocation and electric shocks. On June 3, federal prosecutors announced that they had been holding Gmez under a type of arrest known as "*arraigo*," in which the detainee is not held in jail but cannot move from a designated area. Eventually, on June 22, Gmez's family was permitted to see him while he was held under arraigo in Mexico City's Hotel Edison. The PGR informed Human Rights Watch in September that the torture allegations and complaints of procedural irregularities were being investigated by the PGR's Internal Criminal Investigations Unit (Visitadura General) and Internal Administrative Investigations Unit (Contralora Interna).

Mexican human rights groups have also documented a growing problem of "disappearances" in northern Mexico, apparently related to drug trafficking. PRODH chronicled at least sixteen between June 1996 and August 1997 in Sinaloa state. In many cases it was not clear if the victims were detained by police or soldiers, or, if such officials were responsible, if the authorities were working with the goal of fighting drug trafficking in general or were in the employ of a drug trafficker looking to weaken a rival gang. Rmulo Rico Urrea, for instance, remains missing since September 1996. A report by the *New York Times* in March described evidence of links between the abductors and Gen. Jess Gutirrez Rebollo, who was named in December 1996 to head Mexico's anti-drug efforts, then removed and jailed on allegations that he was in the employ of drug traffickers. In October, the same newspaper reported that more than fifty people have been reported "disappeared" in Chihuahua, most of them after being detained by police.

Torture in Mexico remained a serious problem in the cases of suspected guerrillas and in detentions related to common crime. In its third periodic report submitted to the United Nations Committee Against Torture (CAT), the Mexican government provided an excessively formal description of the torture problem in Mexico, focusing on legal reforms and provisions designed to combat torture while ignoring the inefficacy of these measures. In its conclusions reached in April, the CAT noted the positive nature of some of the legal reforms and education initiatives undertaken by the government but strongly faulted the "profound dichotomy" between legal and administrative structures and the continuing systematic practice of torture in the country. Mexican human rights groups prepared detailed documentation on torture in anticipation of the August visit of Nigel Rodley, the U.N. special rapporteur on torture. Rodley's visit to Mexico was his first to Mexico in his U.N. post and followed years of requests to the Mexican government for permission to make the trip.

During 1997, public security continued to demand attention from Mexican policy makers, as common and organized crime grew in magnitude. President Ernesto Zedillo noted in his state-of-the-union address in September that "public insecurity in the streets is the most serious concern facing Mexicans." He lamented, too, that much of that insecurity came from the fact that Mexicans continue "fearing both those who commit crime and those who should fight it, because frequently [those who should be fighting crime] cover it up or tolerate illegal acts." Nowhere were public security concerns and human rights violations stemming from police operations—more clear than in Mexico City, where techniques developed to combat crime hinged upon the violation of civil liberties, including freedom of movement and due process. Police cordoned off streets or entire neighborhoods, detained all present, and only later released detainees not deemed suspicious. The abuses stemming from this anti-crime strategy reached tragic proportions on September 8, when, after responding to a reported robbery in the Buenos Aires district, a police officer was killed in an apparent shoot-out with the suspects. Three people reported by witnesses to have been detained by police were found murdered the next day. Three other people detained by men in plain clothes and missing since September 8, were found dead on September 30. In October, police arrested at least two dozen police officers, one of whom was accused of aggravated homicide. After the incident, authorities dissolved the "Jaguars" Special Dissuasive Group (Grupo Especial Disuasivo "Jaguars"), the Mexico City police force from whose ranks came the officer accused of aggravated homicide. At this writing it was not clear how far up the chain of command the investigation would reach.

As police took ever-stronger actions to fight crime, journalists covering crime increasingly faced harassment, physical attacks, and even death. Gunmen killed at least two journalists during the year, Jess Bueno Len of the Guerrero state weekly *7 Das* and Benjamn Flores Guerrero, with the Sonora state daily *La Prensa*. Prior to his murder, Bueno had written that he believed state officials planned to kill him in retaliation for his reporting. In the Flores Guerrero case, state authorities arrested two men they accused of carrying out the assassination at the behest of a man believed to be a drug trafficker.

Other physical attacks against journalists also took place during the year. In separate incidents in September, for instance, unidentified assailants kidnapped two reporters with the daily *Reforma*. On September 5, after interviewing family members of PGR agents accused of drug trafficking, Daniel Lizrraga was driven around in a taxi by men who interrogated him about the interviews and threatened him to stop covering the subject. Before releasing Lizrraga, the assailants stole materials related to the story, including his interview notes. Just days before, on August 25, assailants kidnaped, beat, and threatened *Reforma* reporter David Vicente, who was covering the "disappearance" of a Mexico City police agent. Then, on September 13, men dressed in civilian clothing kidnaped Ren Solorio, a reporter with the *Hechos* news program on TV Azteca. The assailants tortured the journalist by placing a plastic bag over his head and threatening to execute him. They warned him and his boss, anchor Javier Alatorre, to drop stories critical of police operations in Mexico City. The station had recently broadcast a news story with footage showing armed robbers talking with police officers after committing robberies. The following day, *Hechos* reporter Ernesto Madrid suffered a similar attack. On September 17, a reporter from the daily *El Universal* who had covered the same story broadcast on "Hechos" was beaten.

Mexican journalists and foreign correspondents in the country also continued to face the harassment of criminal libel suits, which, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), carried with them the threat of a maximum of eleven months in prison. Among those facing defamation charges were Ninfa Deandar, editor of Tamaulipas state daily *El Maana de Nuevo Laredo*, who has suffered death threats, and Sam Dillon and Craig Pyes of the *New York Times*. Other journalists were threatened with court action if they did not submit to prosecutors' questioning regarding information published in their newspapers.

In the area of labor rights, Mexicans continued to suffer violations stemming from lax government enforcement of labor standards and legal structures that impeded the organization of independent unions. For instance, Human Rights Watch documented the government's failure to enforce anti-discrimination law in export-processing factories known as maquiladoras and pro-government bias within federal labor tribunals. In 1996 and 1997, Human Rights Watch filed complaints about these problems before the United States National Administrative Office (U.S. NAO) (see The Role of the International Community). The U.S. NAO was created by the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC), commonly referred to as the labor rights side agreement of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to handle such matters. Union activists also faced threats, physical attacks, and reprisals for union organizing.

An important appeals-court decision in June offered hope that certain longstanding legal restrictions on union freedoms in Mexico would be eliminated. Based on a challenge made by the Single Union of Workers of the Fishing Ministry (Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la Secretaria de Pesca, SUTSP)—the union on whose behalf Human Rights Watch filed one of the U.S. NAO cases mentioned above—a court ruled unconstitutional provisions of a federal labor law that prohibited more than one union from organizing in any single government entity, such as a ministry. While the decision constituted an important success for freedom of association advocates, it was not clear what impact the decision would have, since federal labor law did not define the rights of second, minority unions in the federal workplace and the June

legal decision did nothing to fill the legal void. Until Mexican law specified the rights of second unions-including their ability to receive union dues and have time off for official union activities-the formation of more than one union in federal workplaces would prove meaningless. Indeed, though the court decision gave SUTSP the right to exist along with a pro-government union within the Ministry of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fishing (Secretaria del Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca, SEMARNAP), SUTSP was not able to work as a union. At this writing, SUTSP is working through the courts to have its rights defined.

The Right to Monitor

The Mexican government continued to react vehemently against international human rights pressure, dismissing well-documented human rights reports and even expelling foreign human rights monitors. As in past years, Mexican human rights groups faced serious threats and attacks during 1997.

Church-related human rights groups continued to come under attack throughout Mexico. In Mexico City, a series of death threats received by members and collaborators of PRODH tapered off by the end of the 1996, but armed men appeared outside the group's Mexico City offices in May after the group gave assistance to foreigners threatened with expulsion. After keeping watch on the offices for a week, the men disappeared. Following a series of death threats against PRODH in 1996, some of which were delivered in writing and by hand to the group's Mexico City address, authorities installed a closed-circuit video camera outside PRODH's offices and instructed police to patrol the area near the building where the group worked. Judicial investigations into the threats, however, led nowhere, as authorities failed to follow up leads provided by PRODH.

Chihuahua's Commission of Solidarity and Defense of Human Rights (Comisin de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, COSYDDHAC) came under renewed threat in January, when the organization's secretary and founder were told to leave or they would be killed. COSYDDHAC had received similar threats during 1996. On February 15, following increasing pressure against members of the Fray Bartolom de las Casas Human Rights Center (Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolom de las Casas"), a group of investigators from the center were attacked in Sabanilla, ambushed as they tried to leave the municipal center. Though they had traveled to the troubled municipality to gather information, they decided to leave after finding police unwilling to help them; as they left the community, armed men stopped them on the road and opened fire when the group tried to reverse its vehicles. Jos Montero from the center was wounded in the arm.

Also in Chiapas, the Coordinating Group of Nongovernmental Organizations for Peace (Coordinadora de Organismos No Gubernamentales por la Paz, CONPAZ) came under renewed attack. On October 7 and November 4, 1996, and February 9, 1997, unidentified assailants tried unsuccessfully to burn the group's offices. On November 7, 1997, a CONPAZ member group, Chiltak, received anonymous death threats naming several people who would be killed. Then, on May 7, the group's director, Gerardo Gonzlez, received death threats by telephone.

The government showed disdain for international human rights reporting by rejecting information and reports by international human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. The day that Human Rights Watch published its report on rural violence, for instance, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement asserting that the government was concerned about human rights protection but accusing Human Rights Watch of "Trying with its partial and unobjective report to distort the real human rights situation in Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Sinaloa." The statement, typical of the government's hollow human rights rhetoric, dismissed the report as dealing with "presumed violations that have been resolved or are in the process of being resolved."

When Human Rights Watch challenged the accusations, the Foreign Ministry pointed out three cases that it considered resolved or in process of being concluded. In the report on rural violence, Human Rights Watch had noted the arrest of the aggressors in two of the cases indicated by the government. Of dozens of other cases detailed in the report, however, the Foreign Ministry failed to indicate any one in which a government official had been prosecuted for having committed a human rights violation.

The government's unwillingness to engage in serious dialogue on human rights issues was reiterated in September, when high-level government officials refused to meet with a delegation headed by Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre San. Following this incident and a similarly embarrassing confrontation with French human rights organizations, the government announced the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Mexico's International Human Rights Obligations. At this writing, the commission has yet to begin its work of coordinating actions designed to ensure that Mexico lives up to these obligations.

Mexican authorities, however, did more to limit human rights monitoring than just issue vacuous press releases and close the door to dialogue. In April, the government expelled Vilma Nez and Benjamn Cullar from the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights (Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme, FIDH) and Georgeanne Potter of the Boston-based Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Authorities later apologized to Potter and told her she would be permitted back into the country. Also in April, officials pressed twelve European peace activists to leave the country because they participated in a protest march in Chiapas. The Mexican Foreign Ministry also sought to limit the access of human rights groups to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Under the guise of improving the commission's procedures, Mexico pushed for changes that would have eviscerated the commission. Under the Mexican proposals, the offices of government ombudsmen-rather than nongovernmental organizations-would be the principal conduit for cases to come before the commission, the commission's reports would be confidential, and, according to the legal advisor to Mexico's Foreign Ministry, those who presented cases to the commission would not be permitted to be from "a third country or international organization far from the historical and cultural reality of Mexico." The government's proposals were not adopted.

The Role of the International Community

European Union

Mexico and the European Union (E.U.) agreed in October 1996 to begin formal talks on a trade, political, and cooperation agreement. In June, Mexico and the European Commission, which negotiates the terms of agreements with non-member states, reached agreement on an interim accord, but the pact was rejected by the E.U.'s Council of Ministers on the grounds that the interim agreement did not include the EU's standard human rights clause. Mexico had succeeded in stripping from the clause reference to its internal human rights policies. In July, Mexico agreed to the insertion of the full human rights clause.

Though ultimately unsuccessful at weakening the European Union's human rights clause, in July Mexico did manage to block U.S. \$340,000 in E.U. aid for the Mexican Academy of Human Rights (Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, AMDH) for monitoring elections in Mexico City. The government of Mexico argued that the Europeans had no standing to give money to a nongovernmental group without the government's consent and argued that the Europeans should not interfere with internal electoral procedures. In April, a ruling party legislative initiative in the Chamber of Deputies would have made it illegal for Mexican election monitors to finance their work with foreign money. Faced with widespread criticism, the proposal was finally withdrawn.

United States

Continuing a trend begun several years ago, the United States increased its public support for Mexican human rights organizations, an important and positive contribution to the local human rights community. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met with representatives of Mexican human rights groups during a visit to Mexico in May, and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City maintained close contact with such groups. In another positive move, the U.S. government sent an unprecedented State Department mission to Mexico to focus exclusively on human rights issues. Headed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Steven Coffey, the mission resulted from the Mexican government's objection to the State Department's annual human rights report, released in February. The hard-hitting State Department report covered the main problems in Mexico well, finding, "Major abuses included extrajudicial killings, torture, illegal arrests, arbitrary detention, poor prison conditions, illegal searches, violence against women, discrimination against women and indigenous persons, some limits on worker rights, and extensive child labor in agriculture and in the informal economy."

Although the human rights report left no doubt about Mexico's rights problems, and the State Department showed vigor in supporting the Mexican human rights community, this did not mean that the U.S. government was willing to press Mexico for human rights improvements. In this critical area, U.S. policy toward Mexico appeared consistent with prior years: tense bilateral issues involving trade and the economy, drugs, and immigration肘bowed aside human rights concerns.

The U.S. Labor Department continued to examine two labor rights cases submitted under the NAALC. On January 27, the department's U.S. NAO issued a report on a case involving SUTSP, which had been submitted in June 1996 by Human Rights Watch, the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF), and Mexico's National Association of Democratic Lawyers (Asociación Nacional de Abogados Democráticos, ANAD). The petition showed that SUTSP had been unable to exercise its right to freedom of association since early 1995 and that no Mexican government agency effectively enforced freedom of association laws. Even when SUTSP received legal recognition of its union status, officials in SEMARNAP-the environment ministry, where SUTSP was organized-refused to recognize the union. The problem remains as of this writing.

The petitioners in the SUTSP case also argued that certain portions of Mexico's federal labor law violated freedom of association standards, and thereby the NAALC, by establishing that only one union could exist in any federal government agency, such as a ministry, and that Mexico's Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Tribunal (Tribunal Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje, TFCA) was not impartial, as required by the NAALC. Petitioners urged the U.S. NAO to review Mexican compliance with its labor law in light of both domestic and international standards.

In its January 1997 report, the U.S. NAO requested that the U.S. Labor Department analyze jointly with its Mexican counterpart the issue of how Mexican labor standards related to international labor standards, but did not request that action be taken on any issue directly related to the SUTSP case. Through a mechanism termed "ministerial consultations," the two countries decided to hold a conference called Seminar on International Treaties and Constitutional Systems of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The long and detail-oriented information-gathering process undertaken by the U.S. NAO in the SUTSP case, including December 1996 public hearings, proved an important method of shining public light on serious Mexican labor rights problems. At this writing, however, it has not resulted in any specific actions designed to solve those problems. In fact, the January U.S. NAO report failed to include in its analysis much of the well-documented information presented by the petitioners. For instance, the U.S. NAO cited SUTSP appeals court victories to conclude that no freedom of association violation had taken place, arguing that courts had restored freedom of association rights to the union. However, the U.S. NAO did not factor into its decision evidence that, despite the court victories, the union members were never able to exercise their rights, since no government official allowed them to do so. Similarly, the U.S. NAO found no labor tribunal bias in the SUTSP case but did not directly address the petitioners' complaints. For instance, to determine that no bias existed in the tribunal, the U.S. NAO pointed to SUTSP victories when it appealed labor tribunal decisions, even though the ability to appeal a decision shed no light on the workings of the tribunal whose decision was appealed. Further, the U.S. NAO found that, given its structure, the tribunal would appear to be biased in some cases that came before it, but, even given this finding, decided that no further action needed to be taken on the bias issue, even though the NAALC required labor tribunals to be completely free of bias.

In the second case processed by the U.S. NAO during 1997, Human Rights Watch, ILRF, and ANAD accused the Mexican government of failing to enforce anti-discrimination laws by permitting mandatory, hiring-related pregnancy testing of female job applicants in maquiladoras. The complaint also alleged that victims of this discrimination did not have effective access to labor tribunals to resolve the issue. Submitted in May, the NAO decided to accept the case for review and began a months-long process of gathering information on the issues raised. The Mexican government responded to the case by asserting that pregnancy testing violated neither Mexican nor international law. At this writing, the U.S. NAO is still gathering information on the issues raised by petitioners. In October, the U.S. NAO announced that it would hold public hearings on the case on November 19.

A third case was briefly reviewed by the U.S. NAO but later withdrawn by the petitioners.

Relevant Human Rights Watch report:

State Responsibility for Rural Violence in Mexico, 4/97

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