

Zeid urges Mexico to act to end wave of disappearances in Nuevo Laredo

GENEVA (30 May 2018) – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein has called on the Mexican authorities to take urgent steps to end a wave of disappearances in and around the city of Nuevo Laredo, amid strong indications that these crimes have been committed by federal security forces.

The UN Human Rights Office in Mexico has documented the disappearance of 21 men and two women in Nuevo Laredo in Tamaulipas State from February up to 16 May 2018. According to a local human rights organization, there have been at least 40 disappearances during this period.

According to testimonies received by the UN Human Rights Office, these disappearances were allegedly perpetrated by a federal security force, often late at night or at dawn. People were reportedly detained by uniformed personnel as they walked or drove along public roads, and several burnt out and bullet-ridden vehicles found by the roadside.

“Many of these people are reported to have been arbitrarily detained and disappeared while going about their daily lives. It is particularly horrific that at least five of the victims are minors, with three of them as young as 14. These crimes, perpetrated over four months in a single municipality, are outrageous,” said Zeid.

The High Commissioner noted that despite ample information and evidence Mexican authorities have made little progress in locating the disappeared persons and investigating what happened to them. In some cases, families have undertaken their own searches, without any protection, and relatives have to date found the bodies of at least six victims. Several witnesses have been subjected to threats, and one was disappeared for two days.

“It is vital the Mexican authorities carry out an effective search for those whose whereabouts are still unknown and to conduct a diligent, independent and complete investigation to find out what happened, identify those responsible and ensure they are brought to justice. They must also grant protection to witnesses and defenders, and assistance to victims’ relatives,” Zeid said.

On 10 May, the National Human Rights Commission issued precautionary measures addressed, among others, to Semar (the Navy) to protect the civil population of Tamaulipas, but at least three disappearances have happened since then.

“It is extremely worrying that these enforced disappearances are taking place just a few months after the adoption of the General Law on Disappearances,” the High Commissioner noted. “What has been happening in Nuevo Laredo is a litmus test of

whether this new law actually represents the change its adoption promises or whether enforced disappearances, followed by impunity and a lack of reparation to the victims, will continue.”

“States have the obligation to guarantee the security of the population. In the case of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial executions carried out by public officials, it is even more urgent for the State to act to demonstrate that it neither condones nor tolerates the commission of such grave violations,” the High Commissioner said.

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*2018 is the **70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the UN on 10 December 1948. The Universal Declaration – translated into a world record 500 languages – is rooted in the principle that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” It remains relevant to everyone, every day. In honour of the 70th anniversary of this extraordinarily influential document, and to prevent its vital principles from being eroded, we are urging people everywhere to **Stand Up for Human Rights**: www.standup4humanrights.org.*

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