

GUATEMALA

Amid Heightening Tensions, Consuelo Porras Makes List of Attorney General Nominees

Tension is mounting in Guatemala as a high-stakes attorney general selection process nears its conclusion. Attorney General Consuelo Porras, placed on the Engel List last summer for obstructing investigations into corruption, remains on the list of six candidates sent to President Alejandro Giammattei to choose from by mid-May. Porras, who [threatened](#) the nominating committee with legal action if they considered allegations that her doctoral thesis was [plagiarized](#), received the highest number of points from the committee. The committee, however, after eight rounds of voting, did not select her as one of the six final candidates, a move that led two lawyers [to file](#) an injunction with the Constitutional Court, alleging arbitrariness in the selection process. The Court [ruled](#) that the nominating committee had to base their selection on merits, and the committee as a result added Porras to their list. President Giammattei has conducted interviews with all the final candidates and has said a second round of interviews will take place this week.

In February, the Public Ministry, led by Porras, issued arrest warrants for [seven](#) prosecutors investigating corruption cases involving former or current government officials and members of Guatemala's economic elite. Six anti-corruption prosecutors were arrested on spurious charges, and one remains in prison awaiting trial. The State Department on March 8 [expressed](#) deep concern about "Guatemalan Attorney General Consuelo Porras' continued, brazen attacks on Guatemala's justice system through politically motivated arrests and detentions of current and former public servants fighting corruption."

Giammattei, under Investigation, Bristles at Efforts to Protect Judicial Independence

Rather than responding to pressure to protect human rights and judicial independence, Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei has gone on the offensive. Last January, as the process of nominating the new attorney general was about to get underway, the head of the G-13 Donor Group (consisting of nine countries, as well as international financial institutions, the UN, and the Organization of American States) invited member countries and the nominating committee to meet to discuss the process so that donor countries could offer support. President Giammattei, in [response](#), issued a communique demanding that the member countries (Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and the United Kingdom) not interfere in internal affairs. In an [interview](#) with Americano Media, Giammattei made similar statements in March after US Ambassador William Popp was present in the court building where a hearing was being held to review the removal of Judge Erika Aifan's judicial immunity. Although the State Department's [protocol](#) for supporting civil society includes attending judicial hearings of human rights defenders, Giammattei called the ambassador's presence "a clear violation" and an "attack on the Convention of Vienna." The Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations ([CACIF](#)) and the [Chamber of Industry](#) also issued statements protesting the ambassador's presence.

Judge Aifan, who in 2021 received a Woman of Courage Award from the State Department, was forced to [flee into exile](#) in March, faced with spurious accusations from the Attorney General's Office and the likely removal of her immunity. She was presiding over a case in which Alejandro Giammattei is accused of [accepting bribes](#) from construction companies to finance his electoral campaign. Aifan is the sixth judicial sector professional this year to seek refuge abroad. Among the others [forced to flee](#) were prosecutors investigating Giammattei's alleged acceptance of [bribes](#) from a mining company. In addition to the persecution of Aifan, another esteemed judge, Pablo Xitumul, had [his immunity removed](#) in February and was suspended from his position.

The US is not alone in its concern about attacks on independent judges and prosecutors and the undermining of the rule of law. The European Union in a February 11 [statement](#) expressed "utmost concern over the ongoing deterioration of the rule of law in Guatemala, where the Supreme Court of Justice and the Prosecutor-General have initiated legal action against independent judges, lawyers and prosecutors, resulting in arrests and loss of judicial immunity." The UN Rapporteur on judicial independence in a February 13 [statement](#) noted that these attacks on judges and prosecutors "benefit networks of corruption." The UN's concerns were [repeated](#) on March 24 by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) [called for](#) the "cessation of any interference against the independence of the Judiciary in order to guarantee independent and impartial justice" and made clear that these attacks are occurring "in a context of severe setbacks in the fight against impunity and corruption in Guatemala."

Likewise, both international human rights bodies and the [European Parliament](#) have expressed concern about the election of the Attorney General. In March the IACHR and the UN Special Rapporteur noted [reports of pressures](#) on members of the nominating committee for Attorney General and called on the Guatemalan government to "guarantee international standards of independence and impartiality" during the appointment process for the country's new Public Prosecutor and Attorney General. In early April, the European Parliament in a [resolution](#) noted that the UN and IACHR have issued [unmet] recommendations that would bring Guatemala's selection process for Attorney General, as well as high court judges, into line with international standards. "Guatemala has suffered a continuous process of institutional co-optation and the dismantling of the rule of law, the systematic obstruction and harassment of the legitimate work of judges and prosecutors, smear campaigns, arrests and intimidation of justice operators, in particular those from the CICIG, the Human Rights Prosecutor's Office, and the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity (FECI), and an intensification and increase of aggressions against, as well as the criminalisation of, civil society organisations and human rights defenders," the resolution states. The European Parliament [called on](#) Guatemalan authorities "to urgently take the necessary measures to ensure the safety and integrity of judges, prosecutors, lawyers" and urged the authorities to secure the safe return of those forced to leave the country out of fear for their safety, noting that more than twenty have been forced into exile.

Rep. Torres Asks Treasury to Sanction Guatemalans Involved in Corruption

Congresswoman Norma Torres in late April [asked](#) Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to investigate and sanction corrupt Guatemalan nationals. In her letter, she noted that many of the prosecutors who have been targeted were core staff or key champions of the now-defunct US-supported International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). As Torres points out, "[I]ndependent press reports in recent weeks, as well as information provided to US officials by

Guatemalan judges and prosecutors in exile . . . reveal a significant network of corruption within Guatemala’s private sector that have allegedly benefited illegally from government contracts, public works projects, and other schemes. Some of these individuals have been under formal investigation by CICIG and accused of serious acts of corruption. Many of those cases were not investigated further by current Prosecutor General Consuelo Porras, leaving corrupt interests free to act with impunity.”

For additional information on Guatemala, see the monthly report of PBI Guatemala, available [here](#).

HONDURAS

Juan Orlando Hernandez is Extradited to the United States Former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez was [extradited](#) to the United States on April 21. He is accused of participating in a corrupt and violent drug-trafficking conspiracy to facilitate the importation of tons of cocaine into the United States, from 2004 to 2022. According to the indictment, Hernandez “received millions of dollars from multiple drug-trafficking organizations in Honduras, Mexico, and elsewhere . . . Hernandez used those drug-trafficking proceeds to enrich himself, finance his political campaigns, and commit voter fraud, including in connection with the 2013 and 2017 Honduran presidential elections.”

The statement that Hernandez committed voter fraud is the first such assessment by a US government entity. The State Department recognized Hernandez as the winner of the 2017 election, while [acknowledging](#) “irregularities identified by the OAS and the EU election observation missions, and strong reactions from Hondurans across the political spectrum.” These strong reactions [included](#) widespread protests and the shooting deaths of more than twenty protesters by Honduran security forces.

State Department Reports Fifteen Unlawful Killings by Honduran Forces in 2021 In its 2021 [Human Rights Report](#) on Honduras, the State Department, citing figures of the National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH), reported 15 arbitrary or unlawful killings by security forces in the first eight months of last year. This figure represents an increase over [2020](#), when over the full span of the year 13 such killings were reported. In addition to the rise in arbitrary killings, the use of torture also increased. CONADEH reported 69 cases of alleged torture or cruel and inhuman treatment by security forces through August 2021, according to the State Department, compared with 28 cases of alleged torture by security forces through September 2020. The full report is available [here](#).

Two Human Rights Defenders Murdered Garifuna leader Alonso Salgado was [murdered](#) and another leader, Zury Quintanilla, was seriously injured in the Garifuna community of Rio Tinto, Atlantida on the night of May 1. Eight gunmen entered Quintanilla’s house and fired on the two leaders. Quintanilla, according to [reports](#), is a teacher and is secretary of the community board. Salgado had been a former member of the community board.

Lenca indigenous leader Justo Benitez Sanchez was murdered on April 30, by armed men who opened fire on him in his home in the community of San Isidro, San Francisco de Ojuera, in the department of Santa Barbara. He was a leader in the Santa Barbara Environmentalists Movement (MAS). He had been working in human rights for the last 15 years, defending water

sources and land affected by extractive and hydroelectric projects. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras [called on](#) the government to urgently implement measures to prevent such attacks and called for a prompt and thorough investigation.

Castro Signs Law to Repeal ZEDES On April 25, President Xiomara Castro [signed](#) a measure passed by the Honduran Congress to repeal the Zones for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDES). As the Associated Press [puts](#) it, “A plan to create special self-governing zones for foreign investors in Honduras has been thrown into limbo with the new government’s repeal of a law many criticized as surrendering sovereignty.” The ZEDES were free from import and export taxes, but could set up their own internal forms of government and their own courts, security forces, schools, and social security systems. Permission for the zones still remains in the country’s constitution.

As Rodolfo Pastor, a member of Castro’s cabinet, [explains](#), “With those that already [exist] there is going to be dialogue because autonomous zones are not going to be allowed.” Several zones are already being developed, including Prospera (a 58-acre development on the island of Roatan) and Orquidea (an agro-industrial park near the city of Choluteca that produces peppers and tomatoes for export). In response to the decision, the Próspera Group [stated](#) that it would be “proceeding confidently” with development of the ZEDE. “For the State of Honduras to deny these rights would plainly violate its obligations under international and domestic law based on well-established legal principles,” reads an April 20 [statement](#) on the group’s website. “Honduras Próspera, Inc., the Promoter & Organizer of Prospera ZEDE, is a U.S. company with rights under the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) and the U.S.-HN Bilateral Investment Treaty, which extend to investments made in Próspera ZEDE the highest degree of legal protection in Honduras. Many other investors from other countries likewise enjoy powerful treaty rights.”

From our [PBI team in Honduras](#) comes the following information, covering the first quarter of this year:

Castro Takes Action on Subsidized Electricity, Amnesty Law, UN Anti-Impunity Mission

The first months of 2022 have been marked by several measures adopted by the administration of Xiomara Castro, who took office as the first female president of Honduras on January 27. At her inauguration, Castro warned that she was taking the reins of a "bankrupt" country, with one of the highest poverty levels on the continent. According to data from the Honduran Social Forum on Foreign Debt and Development (FOSDEH), about 71 percent of the country's population lives in poverty and almost half in extreme poverty. Against this backdrop, one of the first initiatives adopted by the Council of Ministers was to subsidize electricity for families consuming less than 150 kilowatts per month. This measure has already benefited 1,340,000 families.

At the inauguration, Xiomara Castro also promised to fight corruption and criminalization, a commitment that for the moment has materialized in the Law of Amnesty for Political Prisoners, Recognition of Martyrs and Condemnation of the Coup d'Etat of 2009. In response to charges that the law represents a new “pact of impunity” to benefit officials of Manuel Zelaya's government, the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared and Detained in Honduras (COFADEH), the entity in charge of evaluating the cases, has explained that the law seeks to put an end to political persecution in Honduras. PBI accompanied COFADEH in several amnesty actions, including the case of Eduardo Urbina. Urbina had to abandon his studies and go

into exile in Costa Rica for five years after being [criminalized](#) in the post-electoral context of 2017. So far, COFADEH has allowed at least 50 people to benefit from the Amnesty Law and has pending requests from several campesino groups.

With the objective of fighting corruption, the Xiomara administration has asked the United Nations to install an International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (CICIH) to "contribute in the fight against the evils and vices left by the past government of Juan Orlando Hernandez."

UN Report Highlights Criminalization of Defenders and Weak Protection Mechanism

According to [the annual report prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#), during 2021, there were at least 302 attacks registered against defenders and journalists. Seventy percent of these attacks targeted those who defend land, the environment, and common property. The report notes the murders of 10 defenders in 2021. In view of this situation, the OHCHR identified as essential the strengthening of the National Protection System, "starting with the capacities and institutional will of all the powers of the State."

A pending task for the new administration is the restructuring of the National Protection Mechanism, which has been heavily criticized by civil society organizations. Through our holistic accompaniment and dialogue with authorities, PBI Honduras has identified a lack of trust, absence of a preventive and differential approach, insufficient investigative processes, and a lack of training and information as fundamental flaws of this institution.

In its annual report, the United Nations Office also identifies a "practice of using criminal law to criminalize the work of defending human rights." The situation has worsened with the implementation of the reform of the Penal Code, which was approved in October of last year. During a tour of the Department of Comayagua, PBI was able to observe how the application of this law has increased criminalization and evictions in the area.

Guapinol Defenders Released, but Concerns Remain After spending more than two years in arbitrary pre-trial detention, the Guapinol River defenders were finally released on February 24, 2022. The Supreme Court of Justice accepted two appeals filed by the legal team to revoke the indictments and, consequently, the trial against the defenders was annulled. Although all of the defenders are now released and with their families, the Trujillo Sentencing Court has not yet granted them their definitive letters of release, only provisional ones.

A further cause of concern is the vulnerability of the communities that continue to face risks as they defend their natural resources against the mining and other projects of Los Pinares, a company owned by businessman Lenir Pérez. On the night of February 16, a group of armed people on motorcycles fired around 20 shots near defender Juana Zúñiga's house. Her mother and daughters were inside the house. According to Zúñiga, who at the time of the attack was travelling to Tegucigalpa to demand the release of her colleagues, the gunmen were trying to intimidate her.

During our visits to the community of Guapinol we have also been made aware of concerns about the appointment of Adan Fúnez, mayor of Tocoa, as governor of the department of Colón. The community claims that "this appointment makes a mockery of the people who are fighting to regain the territory that has been given away to these mining companies of death in Colón." In the context of the dialogues that are taking place at the level of the EU Council and Parliament on the new Due Diligence Law for companies, PBI has presented the case of Guapinol as an example of how the situation of the community would have been different if

there had been binding legal frameworks in place regarding business and human rights.

Planner of Berta Cáceres' Murder Still Awaits Sentencing Seventy-three months after the murder of human rights defender Berta Cáceres, the case remains in impunity. The sentencing of David Castillo, one of the [planners](#) of the murder, is still pending after being postponed on several occasions. His sentencing is now scheduled for May 18. The Civic Council of Grassroots and Indigenous Organizations in Honduras (COPINH) is calling for the sentence to be consistent with the demonstration of Castillo's guilt. COPINH has made clear that the search for justice will not end with this ruling; COPINH will continue to demand that the Public Prosecutor's Office take action against the remaining intellectual authors of the crime. COPINH has pointed specifically to the Atala family.

As former president of the DESA company, Castillo also faces charges in the case known as "Fraud on the Gualcarque." Castillo has been accused of the crimes of fraud and use of false documents. He had sought to benefit from the new the Amnesty Law, but his appeal was rejected because he did not meet the eligibility requirements.

Together with COPINH, organizations such as COFADEH, the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice and the Center for Justice and International Law have denounced the fact that six years after the assassination of Berta Cáceres, the Honduran State has not taken the necessary actions to address the problems that originally put the Lenca communities at risk. Their situation has been compounded by the complicated situation in the community of Río Blanco, where, in our last visit to the area, PBI was able to observe how the municipality of Intibucá (La Esperanza) is promoting individualization of land ownership. According to members of the community, this effort would lead to the land being divided and subsequently sold to private interests. COPINH points out that this violates the ancestral right of indigenous peoples over their lands and territories, which have always been communal.

LGBTQ+ Organizations Press Honduran Government for Greater Protection As part of the International Day of Trans Visibility on March 31, sexual diversity organizations reminded the Honduran government of the need to move forward with the approval of a Gender Identity Law and the reform of the law and regulations of the National Registry of Persons. They noted that these proposed reforms would bring Honduran legislation into line with international human rights standards. They continue to demand the compliance with the ruling of the Inter-American Court in the case of Vicky Hernandez. The Court found the government of Honduras responsible for the death of the trans human rights defender in the context of the 2009 coup. This ruling, which highlights the important role of trans women as defenders of gender identity, orders the government to promptly implement a number of measures, such as the adoption of procedures for the recognition of gender identity.

In a [hearing](#) before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, [Arcoiris LGBT Association of Honduras](#) and the [Center for LGTBI Development and Cooperation-Somos CDC](#), which PBI has accompanied since 2015 and 2022, respectively, outlined the current complicated situation of the LGTBQ+ community in the country. According to the Observatory of the lesbian network Cattrachas, so far this year at least ten sexually diverse people have been murdered and only two of these cases have been prosecuted.

MEXICO

UN Committee on Forced Disappearances Calls for End to Militarized Security Policy The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in an April 12 [statement](#), released the conclusions the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances made after a November visit to Mexico. Among the top conclusions: the UN committee urges the Mexican government to take immediate action to end impunity in cases of disappearance; create a national policy to prevent disappearances; strengthen its search and investigative process; and strengthen civilian law enforcement and establish a plan for the orderly, immediate, and verifiable withdrawal of military forces from public security tasks.

According to the [report](#), 95,121 people were recorded as disappeared in Mexico as of November 26. Almost a third of those disappearances have occurred in the last five years. As the committee notes, “8,000 new cases each year [were recorded] in the past five years.” According to the committee, disappearances continue to affect mainly men between the ages of 15 and 40, but the committee remarked on a notable increase in disappearances of boys and girls as young as 12, as well as adolescents and women. “Victims and authorities also reported disappearances for the purpose of trafficking and sexual exploitation,” the committee noted.

The UN committee expressed concern about the situation of human rights defenders, some of whom have been disappeared because of their involvement in searches and combating disappearances, and the disappearances of more than 30 journalists between 2003 and 2021, none of whom have been located. During the visit, the committee heard allegations, too, of disappearances in prisons and migration centers. The committee took note of the obstacles preventing persons deprived of their liberty from contacting the outside world and reporting their whereabouts.

The “militarized approach to public security due to the human rights risks it implies” is another concern of the committee. According to the committee, “between 2007 and 2021, the National Human Rights Commission [CNDH] issued a total of 162 recommendations to the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of the Navy for serious human rights violations, 15 of them related to cases of forced disappearance. Likewise, in 2021, SEDENA [the Secretariat of National Defense] and the National Guard were among the ten authorities most frequently pointed out in the files of alleged human rights violations registered by the CNDH, and SEDENA and the Navy Secretariat were among the 5 federal authorities with the highest number of recommendations in process.” The committee report states, “The permanent participation of the Armed Forces established in the constitutional reform of May 11, 2021, despite being presented as ‘extraordinary, regulated, supervised, subordinate, and complementary,’ casts doubt on its conformity with constitutional and international standards on human rights and citizen security. In view of the above, the committee urges the State to abandon the militarized approach to public security. . . . [T]he committee reiterates its recommendation to strengthen civilian law enforcement and requires the State party to establish a plan for the orderly, immediate, and verifiable withdrawal of military forces from public security tasks.”

The committee found that the alarming trend of increasing enforced disappearances was facilitated by near total impunity. As of November last year, only between 2 and 6 percent of disappearances had resulted in criminal prosecutions, and only 36 convictions had been handed down in cases nationwide. The committee also expressed deep concern about the forensic crisis facing the country: more than 52,000 unidentified deceased persons are in mass graves, forensic service facilities, universities, and forensic storage and safeguard centers. In addition, the Committee noted that, despite institutional and legal developments, the National Search Plan has

not been implemented to carry out searches and investigations.

In its recommendations, the committee identified measures the government should take to implement a national policy to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearances. It urged Mexico to strengthen the search and investigation processes, provide adequate human and financial support to the National Search Commission and local commissions, and ensure systematic and effective coordination of all institutions involved in the process of search, investigation, reparation and accompaniment of victims. The committee also called on Mexico to remove obstacles in criminal prosecution, give due attention to migrant disappearances, and address the forensic crisis in the context of a National Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Enforced Disappearances.

Eight Journalists Murdered in Mexico in First Months of 2022 At least [eight](#) journalists have been murdered in Mexico to date this year. With this number, already Mexico has already surpassed the [number](#) killed in all of 2020 and all of 2021. Already, with seven killed in those years, Mexico was the most dangerous country on record for journalists. On January 24, when three murders of journalists had occurred, the UN [called for stronger measures](#) to protect journalists in Mexico. On February 22, at which point two additional journalists had been murdered, Secretary of State Antony Blinken [expressed concern](#) about the killings of Mexican journalists. On February 24, another journalist [was killed](#), followed by two more in March.

Mexican President Alejandro Lopez Obrador, responding to Blinken’s expression of concern, [shot back](#) that the murders were not carried out by the government, and he pointed to the federal protective mechanism as a measure the government was taking to protect journalists. At least one of the journalists murdered—Lourdes Maldonado—[had protective measures](#) from the federal mechanism.

Report of Experts in Ayotzinapa Case Finds Army Knowledge and Cover Up The Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in a new report, has found evidence of involvement of the Mexican army in the case of the 43 missing students of Ayotzinapa. The report, presented on March 28 by investigators of the GIEI, reveals that Mexican Armed Forces kept students at the Ayotzinapa school under close surveillance, placing military intelligence agents within the student population. The army closely tracked the 43 students on the day of their disappearance, and the army intercepted relevant communications during the night of the students’ abduction and disappearance. The armed forces then engaged in a cover up, concealing and manipulating evidence to construct an “official version” of events. According to the official version—called the “historical truth” by the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018)—the 43 students were detained on the night of September 26, 2014 by police in Iguala and handed over to the Guerreros Unidos cartel. The cartel killed the students, then burned the students’ bodies in the Cocula landfill and dumped the remains in a nearby river.

Previous investigations by the GIEI had already refuted this version; but the current GIEI report shows the investigation that resulted in this official version was characterized by false proceedings and detentions, confessions obtained through torture, alteration of logs, and manipulation of evidence and scenarios.

A month after the students disappeared, members of the Mexican Navy, aided by Marines, dumped bags of unidentified materials at the landfill and lit a large bonfire to provide “evidence” of the version the government would espouse. Former Attorney General Jesús Murillo Karam then arrived on the scene to inspect the “evidence.” The GIEI in November 2021, having gained access to military files, discovered 50 videos taken by a Navy drone recording the

actions of members of the Navy in the Cocula garbage dump. Moments before Murillo Karam's arrival, a group of 40 people, among them members of the Navy, unloaded several bundles in white bags, burned them in the garbage dump, and scattered them in the ravine that leads to the San Juan River. The videos were obtained after President López Obrador ordered the Ministry of Defense and all relevant institutions to open the documents related to that night.

In the ten years prior to the 2014 mobilization, the monitoring of the mobilizations of the students of the Ayotzinapa normal school was continuous: 57 intelligence reports on the activities of the students were issued, the GIEI found. None of these reports made any reference to possible drug trafficking activities by the students, but rather referred to the monitoring of protest activities, assemblies, and other activities carried out by the student body. In 2014 alone, 12 communications and intelligence reports were issued by the Center for Investigation and National Security (CISEN) that gave an account of the activities of the Ayotzinapa students, including the days before and the day of the events, up to the bus-taking activities on the outskirts of Iguala. On September 22, 2014, four days before the students' disappearance, the commander of the 35th Military Zone ordered all commander of army battalions in the state of Guerrero to "keep an eye on the activities of the students of the Raúl Isidro Burgos Normal School in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero with the purpose of informing in a timely manner on the departure of contingents to Mexico City for the commemoration of the of the XLVI anniversary of the events of October 2, 1968." In a separate intelligence operation, the military was also closely tracking and intercepting communications of the Guerreros Unidos cartel.

When shots were fired at the students traveling in buses to the commemoration, this information was transmitted to the commanders, along with information that students were disappeared. "All of these events," according to the GIEI report, "occurred with the knowledge of police and military authorities at all levels in Iguala, Mexico." According to the GIEI, "they all knew, through OBIS reporting directly from the scene and from C-4, that a large number of young people had been violently detained in the midst of gunfire or physical aggressions in two scenarios . . . by several municipal police officers with a huge deployment of vehicles from different entities and police dressed in black in the case of the Palace of Justice. . . It is worth noting that the documentation obtained by the GIEI reveals a striking fact, namely that this detailed monitoring, reproduced in the aforementioned reports, ceases during the critical hours of the occurrence of the events. However, other intelligence documents that reproduce the content of the intercepted communications show that the military authorities had information in real time of the violent events that were occurring in Iguala." The GIEI concludes that "at the very moment of the events, the different levels of military authorities were aware of what was going on, and even made reports at the highest level about events." The intercepted communications could have guided the investigation from September 26, 2014 on, but the military did not disclose the existence of these communications but rather denied their existence.

Several pieces of evidence show the presence of organized crime in the events of the disappeared students. In this regard," the report notes, "the information that may be obtained through international legal assistance from the investigations carried out in the United States into the Guerreros Unidos group may be of great value for the investigation."

The GIEI ends with a number of recommendation, including the prosecution of all those responsible for torture, obstruction, fabrication, and loss of information; revision of the concept of criminal association in order to charge all members of the organization for the organization for the planned actions and the eventual malicious acts; and the necessity of showing that public officials who participate with a criminal organization are part of it. Read the full report [here](#).

Find out more: An [excellent podcast](#) on the investigation, including testimonies recorded weeks after the attacks with Ayotzinapa students who survived, is available [here](#) in English and Spanish. The podcast was produced by Reveal News and [the National Security Archive](#), led by reporting from National Security Archive's Senior Analyst Kate Doyle and Reveal News' Anayansi Diaz-Cortes.

Mexican Government Must Re-Investigate Murder of Digna Ochoa The Inter-American Court [ruled](#) in January that the Mexican government committed serious errors in its investigation of the death of Mexican human rights attorney [Digna Ochoa](#). The Court ordered the government to re-investigate the case. Found dead in her law office with two gunshot wounds in 2001, signs of a struggle, and a note threatening other lawyers with the same treatment, Digna Ochoa became a rallying call for change. President Vicente Fox immediately said her murder was clearly political in nature and would be thoroughly investigated. As evidence accumulated, including witness accounts of military-type men near the building the night before the killing, Mexican prosecutors began floating the possibility that Ochoa killed herself and staged a murder scene. This [narrative](#) ended up being the official finding of prosecutors, and the government closed the case. More information on the case of Digna Ochoa can be found [here](#).

Peace Brigades International is a nongovernmental organization that sends teams of international observers to areas of conflict and repression to provide protective accompaniment to human rights defenders whose lives and work are under threat. Founded in 1981 with its first project in Guatemala, PBI has worked in fourteen countries and on four continents. PBI's international office in Brussels and advocacy staff in Geneva and around the world support efforts in the field to open space for peace and for the defense of human rights.
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