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## Re: President Enrique Peña Nieto: Veto the Law on Interior Security

President Peña Nieto:

Greetings from Amnesty International, a movement of more than 7 million people around the world campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

Almost four years ago, in February 2014, I had the opportunity to meet with you and members of your cabinet, when you were marking your first year as President of Mexico. During that meeting, our delegation warned about the serious human rights crisis facing your country and the disturbing impact of the use of the armed forces for public security tasks and other militarized strategies that your government was eager to continue. It is with deep regret that today, almost four years later, I must write to you at such a crucial moment for the country.

The Mexican Congress has approved a “Law on Interior Security” that places human rights in Mexico at grave risk. Amnesty International unequivocally calls on you to veto this law and send it back to Congress to allow for a broad and genuine debate on this issue.

Alongside Mexican human rights defenders, international human rights mechanisms, and academic experts, Amnesty International has carried out a detailed analysis of the law, identifying many provisions that are contrary to Mexico’s obligations under international law. We are seriously concerned that its implementation will, without a doubt, perpetuate the long list of grave human rights violations in Mexico, including extrajudicial executions, torture and enforced disappearances.

Behind the vague and overly broad concept of “interior security”, the law conceals dangerous and concerted efforts to maintain the role of the armed forces in public security functions. This is despite clear evidence that this strategy has failed to ensure public security during the decade since the army was deployed on the streets of Mexico.

In addition, the law contains no mechanisms for the effective supervision or control of the military, and in particular it fails to ensure that they will be subordinated to and under the command of civilian authorities. The law would allow the armed forces to conduct their own public security operations and even to coordinate police forces, representing a dangerous submission of civilian authorities to military command.

Amnesty International is also alarmed by the authorization that this law would give to the armed forces to participate in the policing of protests.

The law would also allow all information that is generated for its implementation to be treated as classified, and it would be kept a secret. These elements are contrary to the right to freedom of expression, including the right of access to information.

This law would also contravene the right to privacy and would greatly undermine autonomous institutions, such as the National Human Rights Commission, the National Electoral Commission and the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data, obliging them to hand over any information that the armed forces request, without any judicial control, posing a direct risk to millions of Mexicans whose data are held by these institutions.

The number of soldiers deployed for public security tasks has increased considerably during your administration. This increased deployment has not contributed to reducing violence and crime in the country. The year 2017 will end as the most violent year in your term as President, and is set to register the highest homicide rate in at least a decade.

Just a few days back, you called on the Mexican Senate to broaden the debate on this law and listen to all voices. Regrettably, the Senate did not attend to this prudent request, and while it carried out a series of brief ceremonial meetings with relevant participants, these could not be considered a genuine consultation leading to a sincere debate, as you had requested and as is merited by the gravity of this issue.

President Peña Nieto, now that the law is before you, you have the opportunity to rectify the grave flaws that this piece of legislation entails and ensure the respect and protection of human rights in Mexico. Instead of this law, Mexico needs a process to withdraw the armed forces from public security tasks and develop adequately resourced civilian police forces.

Mr. President, we urge you to veto the “Law on Interior Security”.

Yours sincerely,

Salil Shetty  
Secretary General