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Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concern regarding a deeply troubling incident of violence against women in the state of Mexico. We are concerned that more than four years have passed since dozens of women were tortured and sexually assaulted by police officers during operations on May 3-4, 2006, in San Salvador Atenco in the state of Mexico, and still no one has been brought to justice. This case has become an enduring stain on the international reputation of Mexico. We urge you to take all the necessary steps to ensure justice in this case.

Police detained dozens of women during the May 3-4, 2006 police operations. Twenty-six of these women filed complaints with the authorities stating that they had been subjected to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse by state, federal, and municipal police during their arrest and detention. One woman testified that police arrested her without explanation, pulled her hair, forced her to squat down and began to beat her, leaving her with head injuries and multiple bruises. With her shirt pulled over her head, she was then forced into a state police vehicle and made to lie on top of other detainees. During the journey to the Santiaguito prison near Toluca, Mexico state, she was forced to remove some of her clothing and was beaten, threatened, sexually assaulted and raped by members of the state police, who were reportedly cheered on by colleagues.

In October 2006, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission called for criminal investigations by state and federal authorities into the abuses that were committed during the police operations on May 3-4, 2006. In February 2007, Mexico's National Supreme Court instructed a special judicial commission to investigate the abuses. In February 2009, the Supreme Court issued a statement affirming that human rights abuses were committed in San Salvador Atenco, and recommending that the investigations be expanded to determine who committed serious violations of individuals' rights. Many of the women who suffered torture, including sexual violence, filed complaints with the Federal Special Prosecutor on Crimes Related to Violence Against Women and Human Trafficking (*Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos relacionados con Actos de Violencia contra Mujeres y Trata de Personas, FEVIMTRA*), part of the Office of the Federal Attorney General (*Procuraduría General de la República, PGR*).

In July 2009, after a 3-year investigation, FEVIMTRA issued a report identifying 34 members of the state security forces as being responsible for these abuses. The Federal Attorney General's office then transferred jurisdiction over the prosecution of these individuals to the Mexico State Attorney General's Office. Domestic and international human rights organizations are assisting eleven of the women with their legal representation and in their public call for justice.

After months of inertia, it seems clear that local authorities in Mexico state do not intend to take serious action in this case. Under the Mexican Constitution and under international treaties to which Mexico is party, it is the responsibility of the federal government to protect the human rights of all Mexican citizens. We therefore respectfully urge you to ensure that this case proceeds as a matter of urgency, and to make use of the evidence of sexual torture gathered by FEVIMTRA. We call on you to see to it that charges are filed promptly against all those responsible for the torture and sexual assault of the women, including senior officials who failed to prevent these human rights abuses.

Thank you for your attention to this important case.

Sincerely,

*copy to:*

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