**Joint Statement**

November 29, 2017

**Mexican Congress Should Reject Law that Would Normalize Role of Armed Forces in Public Security Tasks**

Washington, DC—In recent days, the Mexican Congress has rushed discussions about the Law on Internal Security (*Ley de Seguridad Interior*, LSI) that would normalize the participation of Mexico’s armed forces in public security tasks. In the media and in public spaces, legislators from various political parties have insisted on the law’s approval. Despite documented concerns from civil society organizations, and against the opinion of human rights and security experts, Mexico’s Congress plans to debate the law on Thursday, November 30.

In this context, the signatory organizations express our concern about the possible approval of the LSI or any other legal reform that would similarly militarize public security in Mexico.

For decades, our organizations have documented the human rights costs of deploying soldiers into Mexican streets as a strategy to combat organized crime. Within the context of this security strategy, we have also documented the obstacles the civilian justice system faces in investigating and sanctioning abuses committed by criminal organizations and Mexican security forces, as well as the impunity that prevails in the majority of these cases.

Given this situation, we urge the Mexican Congress to reject this law that raises serious and legitimate concerns, and to uphold its commitment to human rights, which the Mexican government adamantly defends before the international community. The Mexican State should meet civil society organizations’ demands for reforms that would professionalize the civilian police and guarantee an independent and autonomous National Prosecutor’s Office and National Prosecutor capable of effectively investigating crimes and human rights violations. These are tools that are essential to putting an end to the widespread impunity that persists in the country. Any debate about eventual changes to public security policies should come only after the presentation of a plan to progressively withdraw the armed forces from public security operations and to professionalize federal, state, and local police forces.

Approving the LSI or formalizing the militarization of public security in Mexico would set a fundamentally negative precedent in Latin America. Furthermore, it would threaten recent constitutional reforms meant to protect human rights in Mexico, including the adversarial criminal justice system reforms of 2008, the human rights reform of 2011, and the 2014 reform that restricted the scope of military jurisdiction by granting the civilian justice system the power to investigate and prosecute human rights violations committed by members of the armed forces against civilians. Unless the civilian justice system is strengthened, these reforms run the risk of becoming rights that exist only on paper if the LSI is passed.

\* [See also joint statement published on March 22, 2017](https://www.wola.org/es/2017/03/pronunciamiento-abierto-de-organizaciones-internacionales-de-derechos-humanos-en-contra-de-la-adopcion-de-una-ley-de-seguridad-interior-en-mexico/?utm_source=WOLA+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=f244d2e8d7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_11_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_54f161a431-f244d2e8d7-)

**Signatory organizations:**

Actions by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT)

Amnesty International

Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS)

Conectas Direitos Humanos

Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF)

Latin America Working Group (LAWG)

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)