

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE PRISONER TORTURED BY POLICE

Mexican police tortured Adrián Vasquez Lagunes in order to accuse him of serious crimes. He has been detained since September 2012 in the northern city of Tijuana. All the evidence against him was obtained under torture and on other violations of due process. On 7 April 2015 three of the possible torturers were charged. The authorities must release Adrián Vasquez and bring all responsible to account.

Adrián Vasquez was arrested while driving in Tijuana, Baja California state, on 26 September 2012. He was threatened, beaten and nearly asphyxiated during a 12-hour spell in state police custody. Police forced water up his nose so it filled his lungs. Neighbours saw Adrián Vasquez being beaten when police took him to his home to conduct a search. Adrián Vasquez was then presented by police to the media and falsely identified as a notorious drug trafficker. He was shown with drugs and weapons, which he says were planted by police. The arresting officers presented him to prosecutors and alleged that they had stopped him for speeding in a stolen vehicle and that he had then spontaneously identified himself as a drug trafficker. Soon afterwards, he collapsed and was rushed to hospital for life-saving surgery due to the torture he had suffered. The Federal Attorney General's Office charged Adrián Vasquez with drug offences and illegal possession of firearms. He has been in jail since then while his trial is ongoing.

Since his arrest, Adrián Vasquez's lawyer has proven that he was not in a stolen vehicle, that his arrest records have irregularities, and that the authorities have failed to demonstrate that the weapons and drugs supposedly found in Adrián's car could be linked to him. The statements of neighbours have not been taken into account. Adrián Vasquez never confessed to being a drug trafficker. In 2013 federal authorities announced having captured the real drug lord that they had accused Adrián of being. To date, besides the declarations of the policemen who presumably tortured him, the only evidence against Adrián Vasquez are the arms that were planted on him during his detention with torture. On 7 April 2015 Baja California state prosecutors brought charges against three of the state police officers presumably responsible for Adrián Vasquez's torture. These are the first torture charges ever presented in the state, which is notorious for torture complaints.

Please write immediately in Spanish, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Federal Attorney General's Office to drop charges against Adrián Vasquez Lagunes given that the evidence gathered against him was obtained under torture and other human rights violations;
- Urging them to immediately release Adrián Vasquez due to a lack of evidence for the charges against him;
- Calling on the Baja California state Attorney General to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the torture suffered by Adrián Vasquez and ensure that all those responsible are brought to justice, including accomplices and other officials who failed to document and report it.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 JUNE 2015 TO:

Federal Attorney General

Arely Gómez González
Procuraduría General de la República
Reforma 211-213, Col. Cuauhtémoc, C.P.
06500, México D.F., México
Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx or via web
pgr.gob.mx/servicios/mail/plantilla.asp?ma
il=1

Twitter: @ArelyGomezGlz

Facebook: www.facebook.com/PGR

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimada Señora Procuradora**

Baja California state Attorney General

Perla del Socorro Ibarra Leyva
Procuraduría General de Justicia del
Estado de Baja California
Calzada de los Presidentes No. 1199
Fracc. Río Nuevo, Mexicali, B.C.
C.P. 21080, México

Email: titular.pgjebc@gmail.com or via
web www.pgjebc.gob.mx/content/buzon-
del-procurador

Twitter: @pgjebcmx

Facebook: facebook.com/pgjebcmx

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimada Señora Procuradora**

And copies to:

Adrián Vasquez Lagunes

Atención: Amnistía Internacional México
Luz Saviñón 519, Col. del Valle, Del.
Benito Juárez, C.P. 03100, México, D.F.,
México
Email: info@amnistia.org.mx

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Torture is widespread in Mexico. Police and military officers often use it in the context of public security operations in order to extract “confessions” or “information” from criminal suspects or from people who are simply caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. Officers also use torture to instil fear on detainees so that they are less likely to come forward and report the abuses they suffer.

In a survey commissioned last year by Amnesty International, 64 per cent of respondents feared suffering torture if taken into custody. According to the National Human Rights Commission, there was a six-fold rise in the number of complaints for torture and other forms of ill-treatment received between 2003 and 2013. Between 2010 and 2013 alone there were more than 7,000 complaints. The Commission reported a slight decrease in 2014. However, the Commission’s mandate focuses on allegations against federal officials only. Nobody knows the extent of torture by municipal and state-level officials, who represent the vast majority of police officers in the country.

Torture is frequently condoned, tolerated or ignored by other law enforcement officials, superior officers, prosecutors, judges and some human rights commissions. The result is almost total impunity for abusers and constant risk for everyone else. Only seven torturers have been convicted, at the federal level, since torture became a crime in 1991. Prosecutors and judges are known to use evidence obtained under torture to prosecute and convict victims.

Anyone can be a victim of torture, but those most at risk are men, women and youths who belong to marginalized sectors of society, such as those who live in poor neighbourhoods or those who migrate from Central America, without a Mexican visa and through the most dangerous areas, towards the USA.

Forensic medical examinations of alleged victims of torture, in line with international standards, are very few compared to the number of complaints. The Federal Attorney General’s Office carried out 206 examinations in 2013 and 185 in 2014. Amnesty International could review a sample of them and found that the vast majority were out of step with key UN guidelines. Most victims are never examined by official forensic experts. Those victims who can reach out to independent forensic experts have no certainty as to whether the results will be considered as expert evidence by prosecutors and judges.

In May 2014 Amnesty International launched “Stop Torture”, a global campaign against torture and ill-treatment. Mexico is one of its countries of focus. For more information about the campaign, please see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/stoptorture>. Amnesty International’s report on the situation of torture and other ill-treatment in Mexico can be accessed here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr41/020/2014/en/>.

In March 2015 the UN Special Rapporteur on torture published his own, detailed assessment of the situation in Mexico (www.antitorture.org). The government has heavily criticized the Special Rapporteur’s report and it is yet to accept that torture is widespread in the country. However, it has briefly “welcomed” his analysis and recommendations.

Amnesty International visited Adrián Vasquez in the prison where he is being held in September 2014. The organization has raised his case with local and federal authorities, as well as national and international media, which could have contributed to the charges recently laid against the possible torturers.

Name: Adrián Vasquez Lagunes

Gender m/f: m