

Mexico referral under art. 34 of the Convention: information indicating systematic character of recent cases

22 April 2025

## I. Introduction

Following the announcement by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (hereinafter "CED" or "Committee") to activate the procedure under Article 34 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (hereinafter "Convention") requesting the State Party to provide all relevant information on the situation of Mexico, in accordance with Article 34 of the Convention, the International Federation for Human Rights (hereinafter "FIDH") submits this document to share information on recent cases of enforced disappearances in Mexico with the CED. This document will focus on some cases where there are indications that enforced disappearances are being practiced on a systematic basis, in recent years.

While the term systematic is not defined in Article 34 of the Convention, international criminal law can be used to interpret the meaning of "systematic" regarding Article 34. Following the definition of crimes against humanity in the Rome Statute and interpreted by the International Criminal Court, in the context of crimes against humanity, "the term 'systematic' reflects **the organized nature** of violent acts, referring also to the existence of '**patterns of crimes**' and the improbability of their random or accidental occurrence." In determining whether an attack is systematic, the Court considers, for example, whether (i) identical or similar criminal practices can be identified; (ii) the same modus operandi was used<sup>1</sup>

From 1 January 2023 to date, 28,880 disappearances have been reported in Mexico.<sup>2</sup> Between 2006 and 30 April 2023, 5698 clandestine graves were located.<sup>3</sup> While on 30 April 2023, the government ceased its policy of publicly reporting on findings of clandestine graves, victims' collectives and authorities have continued to uncover clandestine graves all over the country. In January 2025 alone, local Public Prosecutor's Offices and victims' collectives found 40 clandestine graves in Chihuahua, 16 in Rio Verde, San Luis de Potosí, and at least 1 in Xochimilco, Mexico City.<sup>4</sup> The government's refusal to publish this data, since 2023, has obscured the issue of clandestine graves and reinforced impunity.

This document will detail indications that the commission of enforced disappearances continues to occur on a systematic basis, in light of the definition of a "systematic" under international criminal law, in Mexico since 2023, with a specific focus on elements demonstrating the organized nature of enforced disappearances through the recent findings of mass graves, in particular the situation in the states of Jalisco and Nayarit. This document complements a previous document

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<sup>1</sup> *The Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud* (Public redacted version of Trial Judgment), [ICC-01/12-01/18-2594-Red](#), 26 June 2024, para 1114.

<sup>2</sup> RNPdNO, available at <https://versionpublicarnpdno.segob.gob.mx/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ernesto Jiménez, "This is what the map of clandestine graves in Mexico looks like; more than 100 bodies were rescued in the last month (*Así se ve el mapa de fosas clandestinas en México: en el último mes rescataron más de 100 cuerpos*)", *Infobae*, 29 January 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Pablo Ferri, "Mexico still finding clandestine graves, but the State no longer shares statistics (*México sigue encontrando fosas clandestinas, pero el Estado ya no comparte la estadística*)", *El País*, 7 February 2025.

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submitted by FIDH to the CED, where we detailed the commission of enforced disappearances on a systematic and widespread basis since 2006.<sup>5</sup> It does not intend to be exhaustive.

## II. Jalisco

On 5 March 2025 the victims' collective "Guerreros Buscadores de Jalisco" uncovered evidence of disappearances and other crimes committed in a ranch, reportedly run by the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (*Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación* or "CJNG"), in Teuchitlán, state of Jalisco.<sup>6</sup> The so-called *Rancho Izaguirre* (Izaguirre Ranch) was reportedly used to train young men who were forcibly recruited – often through social media on the basis of false job offers – to the CJNG.<sup>7</sup> Victims who lived on the ranch, who were not allowed contact with their families, were reportedly beaten, tortured, or killed, when they showed resistance or failed to meet the cartel's orders.<sup>8</sup> The collective uncovered burned human remains, ovens where bodies were allegedly cremated, and hundreds of personal items, including shoes, clothes, and identity cards at the ranch.<sup>9</sup> According to the National Human Rights Commission, there is evidence suggesting the ranch was also possibly used to "detain and exploit victims of human trafficking and carry out murders and the subsequent disappearance of their bodies."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The document submitted to the CED on 11 February 2025 details the commission of enforced disappearances on a systematic basis in Coahuila, Nayarit and Veracruz, in cases dating between 2009 and 2017. The purpose of the present document is to present information on more recent cases, dating since 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "[Mexico: Disturbing discovery of human remains](#)", 14 March 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "[Mexico: Disturbing discovery of human remains](#)", 14 March 2025. See also "CJNG trained, tortured and killed at Izaguirre ranch (*En rancho Izaguirre el CJNG adiestraba, torturaba y mataba*)", *La Jornada*, 25 March 2025.

<sup>8</sup> This allegation is based on information provided by José Gregorio Lastra, a now-detained member of the CJNG that kidnapped and recruited young men to the ranch, where they were then subjected to torture and in some cases murder. See Carmen Morán Beña, "Harfuch confirms torture, murders and internet recruitment in Teuchitlán (*Harfuch confirma torturas, asesinatos y reclutamiento por internet en Teuchitlán*)", *El País*, 24 March 2025. See also "CJNG trained, tortured and killed at Izaguirre ranch (*En rancho Izaguirre el CJNG adiestraba, torturaba y mataba*)", *La Jornada*, 25 March 2025; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "[Mexico: Disturbing discovery of human remains](#)", 14 March 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "[Mexico: Disturbing discovery of human remains](#)", 14 March 2025. See also National Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* or "CNDH"), "CNDH demands justice and transparency in the Rancho Izaguirre case: Urgent need to clarify crimes and guarantee rights of victims and their families (*CNDH exige justicia y transparencia en el caso del Rancho Izaguirre: Urge esclarecer crímenes y garantizar derechos de las víctimas y sus familias*)", [Communication DGDDH/044/2025](#), 14 March 2025;

<sup>10</sup> CNDH, "CNDH demands justice and transparency in the Rancho Izaguirre case: Urgent need to clarify crimes and guarantee rights of victims and their families (*CNDH exige justicia y transparencia en el caso del Rancho Izaguirre: Urge esclarecer crímenes y garantizar derechos de las víctimas y sus familias*)", [Communication DGDDH/044/2025](#), 14 March 2025. While some collectives have called the ranch an "extermination site (*campo de exterminio*)" others, including the government, characterize it as a "recruitment site". See "Jalisco "training and extermination" camp confirms organized crime modus operandi in Mexico, say collectives (*Campo de "adiestramiento y exterminio" en Jalisco confirma modus operandi del crimen organizado en México, dicen colectivos*)", *CNN Mexico*, 12 March 2025.

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On 18 September 2024, officers of the Police and National Guard entered the ranch, where they detained ten men, rescued two victims deprived of their freedom, recovered one corpse and seized weapons, tactical instruments and vehicles.<sup>11</sup> However, no further investigations were carried out.<sup>12</sup>

It was only six months later, on 5 March 2025, that the victims' collective "Guerreros Buscadores de Jalisco" uncovered the clandestine graves and burned human remains and other items, after being allowed to enter the ranch. On 20 March 2025, after days of public outcry regarding the lack of investigation and ill-management of evidence,<sup>13</sup> the Prosecutor's Office of the State of Jalisco transferred the case to the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (*Fiscalía General de la República* or "FGR"),<sup>14</sup> and on 25 March 2025 the FGR accepted the transfer and took possession of the ranch.<sup>15</sup> As highlighted by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (hereinafter "IACHR"), this "exposes the deficient search carried out by the State. Despite the fact that the property was secured by the authorities in September 2024, and work was carried out with machinery and canine binomials, it was the work of the victims' collective that recently found the clandestine graves." Further, the IACHR expressed alarm that "places of this nature have been able to operate for prolonged periods of time, without intervention by the authorities."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, there is indicia that the State could have known of the ranch's existence and operation by the CJNG as early as 2012.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Public Prosecutor's Office of the State of Jalisco, 20 March 2025, <https://x.com/FiscaliaJal/status/1902821502799532034/photo/1>. See also Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (CIDH), "IACHR calls on the State to redouble its efforts to investigate the facts and identify the human remains found in Teuchitlán, Jalisco (*CIDH llama al Estado a redoblar esfuerzos en la investigación de los hechos e identificar los restos humanos encontrados en Teuchitlán, Jalisco*)", 27 March 2025.

<sup>12</sup> CNDH, "CNDH demands justice and transparency in the Rancho Izaguirre case: Urgent need to clarify crimes and guarantee rights of victims and their families (*CNDH exige justicia y transparencia en el caso del Rancho Izaguirre: Urge esclarecer crímenes y garantizar derechos de las víctimas y sus familias*)", [Communication DGDDH/044/2025](#), 14 March 2025.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., National Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* or "CNDH"), "CNDH demands justice and transparency in the Rancho Izaguirre case: Urgent need to clarify crimes and guarantee rights of victims and their families (*CNDH exige justicia y transparencia en el caso del Rancho Izaguirre: Urge esclarecer crímenes y garantizar derechos de las víctimas y sus familias*)", [Communication DGDDH/044/2025](#), 14 March 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Public Prosecutor's Office of the State of Jalisco, 20 March 2025, <https://x.com/FiscaliaJal/status/1902821502799532034/photo/1>.

<sup>15</sup> Public Prosecutor's Office of the State of Jalisco, 25 March 2025, <https://x.com/FiscaliaJal/status/1904553299443122359>.

<sup>16</sup> Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR), "IACHR calls on the State to redouble its efforts to investigate the facts and identify the human remains found in Teuchitlán, Jalisco (*CIDH llama al Estado a redoblar esfuerzos en la investigación de los hechos e identificar los restos humanos encontrados en Teuchitlán, Jalisco*)", 27 March 2025.

<sup>17</sup> According to a report by CICA (Atrocity Crimes Research Center), on 2012 the original owner of the ranch was dispossessed of his property by the CJNG, with no state investigation carried out. By 2014, new buildings are built on the ranch, which are visible by satellite images. CICA, "Rancho Izaguirre: Authorities in office at key moments (*Rancho Izaguirre: Autoridades en funciones en los momentos clave*)" 14 April 2025.

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Following the finding of clandestine graves at the ranch by the collective, the Prosecutor's Office of the State of Jalisco recovered over 1800 objects of evidence, such as ammunition casings, clothing, shoes, identity documents, watches, and manuscripts, belonging to both men and women.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, three individuals allegedly tied to the recruitment of young men to the CJNG at the ranch were detained.<sup>19</sup> Two of these individuals were former police officers of the nearby city of Tala, revealing the strong connection between the local police and organized crime.<sup>20</sup> On 31 March 2025, ten additional individuals were detained and charged with the crime of disappearance in connection to activities at the ranch.<sup>21</sup>

While further information is needed to understand the exact events that occurred at the Izaguirre Ranch, there are strong indicia that disappearances were committed on a systematic basis, following the definition of systematic provided by international criminal law. The ranch was the site to identical or similar criminal practices, where a similar *modus operandi* was repeated and carried out by a highly organized non-State actor: the forced recruitment by the CJNG of young men, who were then detained at the ranch for training, in a situation of enforced disappearance, without being able to contact family members or authorities. These young men were then subjected to acts of torture and execution, supported by the finding of clandestine graves, ovens, burned human remains, ammunition casings, as well as the hundreds of personal items such as clothing, shoes and identification documents. The sheer number of items of evidence, identified in a single location, also strongly suggests that the manner in which those who were detained and disappeared (and, some of them, executed) was highly organized and practiced on systematic basis, as required by Article 34 of the Convention. The profound failure of local authorities in investigating these crimes – demonstrated by the fact that the ranch was allowed to exist without investigation for years and that, even once the ranch was seized by local authorities, the investigation failed to identify the clandestine graves or the perpetrators until victims' relatives brought these issues back to light, as well as the detention of two former policemen – suggests that the CJNG cartel did likely act with the authorization, support or acquiescence of some at least state officials. The participation of former police officers in the recruitment by the CJNG at the ranch further suggests possible support or acquiescence of certain state officials.

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<sup>18</sup> A list of over 1800 items of evidence, as well as the corresponding images, have been made [publicly available](#) by the Prosecutor's Office of the State of Jalisco. See also IACHR, "IACHR calls on the State to redouble its efforts to investigate the facts and identify the human remains found in Teuchitlán, Jalisco ([CIDH llama al Estado a redoblar esfuerzos en la investigación de los hechos e identificar los restos humanos encontrados en Teuchitlán, Jalisco](#))", 27 March 2025.

<sup>19</sup> Carmen Morán Breña, "Teuchitlán horror claims first arrests: recruiters and former police officers in cartel's service ([El horror de Teuchitlán se cobra las primeras detenciones: reclutadores y expolicías al servicio del cartel](#))", *El País*, 24 March 2025.

<sup>20</sup> Carmen Morán Breña, "Teuchitlán horror claims first arrests: recruiters and former police officers in cartel's service ([El horror de Teuchitlán se cobra las primeras detenciones: reclutadores y expolicías al servicio del cartel](#))", *El País*, 24 March 2025.

<sup>21</sup> Juan Carlos G. Partida, "Detainees at Izaguirre ranch charged with disappearance ([Imputan a detenidos en Rancho Izaguirre por delito de desaparición](#))", *La Jornada*, 31 March 2025.

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### III. Nayarit

Nayarit has similarly been the site of forced recruitments and disappearances by drug cartels. In particular, the mountainous area of Huajicori has reportedly been the site of enforced disappearances and enforced displacement, in the context of a struggle for territorial control between the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG over the past year.<sup>22</sup> At least twelve rural communities, including indigenous groups, have been forcibly displaced from the area due to the violence by drug cartels.<sup>23</sup> On 12 September 2024, 11 bodies were located in the Las Antenas camp, in Huajicori.<sup>24</sup> The cartels operating in this area have forcibly recruited young men from Nayarit to join their ranks<sup>25</sup>. According to victims' collectives, those forcibly recruited are taken to Huajicori, and there could be up to 180 bodies in the area which have yet to be recovered and identified by the State's authorities.<sup>26</sup> In the case of one victim disappeared on 12 January 2025, in Huajicori, his parents had received no information from authorities regarding his whereabouts. Yet, after seeing images on social media documenting the violence in Huajicori, they were able to identify the body of their son.<sup>27</sup> Despite this, authorities have refused to recover this and over a hundred other bodies in Huajicori, citing security concerns for not going.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly to the situation in the Izaguirre Ranch, there are strong indicia that disappearances were committed on a systematic basis in Huajicori. The area, which has become subject to the control of non-State actors, has been the site to identical or similar criminal practices carried out by these groups, with a similar *modus operandi*: the forced recruitment by the cartels of young men in Nayarit, who were then transferred to the area of Huajicori, coupled with the forced displacement of local inhabitants. Hundreds of individuals forcibly recruited by cartels at Huajicori were then reportedly executed, with up to 180 bodies in the area yet to be identified. While a more in-depth

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<sup>22</sup> "Nayarit maintains stability, but faces external threats' due to violence in Sinaloa: Attorney General (*'Nayarit mantiene estabilidad, pero enfrentamos amenazas externas' por violencia en Sinaloa: Fiscal*)", *Aristegui Noticias*, 23 September 2024.

<sup>23</sup> "Army and National Guard seize more than four thousand cartridges in Huajicori, Nayarit (*Ejército y GN aseguran más de cuatro mil cartuchos en Huajicori, Nayarit*)", *Aristegui Noticias*, 15 Julio 2024.

<sup>24</sup> "Nayarit maintains stability, but faces external threats' due to violence in Sinaloa: Attorney General (*'Nayarit mantiene estabilidad, pero enfrentamos amenazas externas' por violencia en Sinaloa: Fiscal*)", *Aristegui Noticias*, 23 September 2024.

<sup>25</sup> "Nayarit maintains stability, but faces external threats' due to violence in Sinaloa: Attorney General (*'Nayarit mantiene estabilidad, pero enfrentamos amenazas externas' por violencia en Sinaloa: Fiscal*)", *Aristegui Noticias*, 23 September 2024.

<sup>26</sup> "Land of bodies: 180 victims of violence await rescue in Huajicori Nayarit (*Tierra de cuerpos: 180 víctimas de violencia esperan rescate en Huajicori Nayarit*)", *Contextos MX*, 7 April 2025.

<sup>27</sup> "Relatives of disappeared persons in Huajicori Nayarit demand answers (*Familiares de personas desaparecidas en Huajicori Nayarit exigen respuestas*)", *Meganoticias*, 7 April 2025.

<sup>28</sup> "Relatives of disappeared persons in Huajicori Nayarit demand answers (*Familiares de personas desaparecidas en Huajicori Nayarit exigen respuestas*)", *Meganoticias*, 7 April 2025; "Land of bodies: 180 victims of violence await rescue in Huajicori Nayarit (*Tierra de cuerpos: 180 víctimas de violencia esperan rescate en Huajicori Nayarit*)", *Contextos MX*, 7 April 2025.

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investigation would be needed, this strongly suggests the existence of a systematic attack by cartels in Huajicori and some levels of tolerance by state authorities.

Regarding enforced disappearances from earlier years, impunity and cover up by State authorities in Nayarit continues to take place. With respect to the wave of enforced disappearances in 2017 – which were documented by FIDH and its member organization IDHEAS as constituting a systematic attack involving a criminal structure within the Nayarit Public Prosecutor Office<sup>29</sup> – the Nayarit Public Prosecutor’s Office, in 2019, destroyed evidence found in a clandestine grave containing 21 bodies.<sup>30</sup> The Prosecutor’s Office admitted to destroying items of clothing and other evidence, citing “hygiene” concerns, without giving further details.<sup>31</sup> This argument has been rejected by families of victims and experts, who argue that the destruction was motivated by a desire to hide evidence that could have shed light on the reasons for the enforced disappearances.<sup>32</sup> When Rosa María Jara Montes, mother of Nicanor Alejandro López Jara, disappeared in 2017 in the context of the aforementioned systematic attack, asked why his son’s clothing was destroyed, the authorities simply asked her why she wanted them.<sup>33</sup> In 2023, victims’ collectives publicly denounced the destruction of evidence in the media and placed complaints to the FGR.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> FIDH and IDHEAS, [Criminal structure within the Nayarit Public Prosecutor’s Office and Crimes Against Humanity](#), June 2021.

<sup>30</sup> “Disappear all evidence: Nayarit Prosecutor's Office destroys evidence (and deepens doubts) ([Desaparecer toda prueba: la Fiscalía de Nayarit destruye evidencias \(y ahonda dudas\)](#))”, *Aristegui Noticias*, 14 April 2023.

<sup>31</sup> “Disappear all evidence: Nayarit Prosecutor's Office destroys evidence (and deepens doubts) ([Desaparecer toda prueba: la Fiscalía de Nayarit destruye evidencias \(y ahonda dudas\)](#))”, *Aristegui Noticias*, 14 April 2023.

<sup>32</sup> “Disappear all evidence: Nayarit Prosecutor's Office destroys evidence (and deepens doubts) ([Desaparecer toda prueba: la Fiscalía de Nayarit destruye evidencias \(y ahonda dudas\)](#))”, *Aristegui Noticias*, 14 April 2023.

<sup>33</sup> “Disappear all evidence: Nayarit Prosecutor's Office destroys evidence (and deepens doubts) ([Desaparecer toda prueba: la Fiscalía de Nayarit destruye evidencias \(y ahonda dudas\)](#))”, *Aristegui Noticias*, 14 April 2023.

<sup>34</sup> “Disappear all evidence: Searchers join complaints in Nayarit ([Desaparecer toda prueba: Se suman buscadoras a denuncias en Nayarit](#))”, *Aristegui Noticias*, 17 April 2023.