

# ASSAULTED BY THE POLICE

When the women left their homes that May morning in 2006, they never imagined the horrific experience that lay ahead of them. During a police operation in response to protests by activists from a local peasant organization in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico, over 45 women were arrested without explanation.

Dozens of them were subjected to physical, psychological and sexual violence by the police officers who arrested them. Years later, they are still waiting for justice. None of the officials responsible for their abuse have been adequately held accountable.



NECESITAMOS  
AUTORIDADES QUE  
SINOS PROTEJAN  
NO VIOLADORES

MERECE  
ESCUCHA  
POLICIA  
NUESTRA

# MEXICO

# IN FOCUS



**BÁRBARA ITALIA MÉNDEZ** is one of at least 26 women who reported being physically and sexually abused by Mexican police in May of 2006 during a public protests in support of local flower sellers in the small town of San Salvador Atenco, Mexico State. She was a 27-year-old student and volunteer working for street children when police detained her without explanation. The officers pulled her hair, beat her, and forced her into a state police vehicle with her shirt pulled over her head. She was made to lie on top of other detainees, and during the journey to the prison, police officers raped her repeatedly. More than two years later, Ms. Méndez and the other survivors still wait for justice.

**BACKGROUND:** In October 2006, the National Human Rights Commission issued a recommendation calling for criminal investigations by authorities into abuses committed by police in Atenco, Mexico, but the recommendation has not been implemented effectively. Several women filed complaints alleging they had been subjected to torture, including sexual violence, by police officers. In February 2009 the Mexican Supreme Court issued a decision acknowledging that serious human rights violations took place at Atenco, and urging extended investigation and the establishment of responsibility for the abuses. Amnesty International calls on President Calderón to show leadership and assure the criminal prosecution of all those responsible for the torture suffered by the women.

As of February 2009, a single policeman of the nearly 3,000 involved in the May 3 and 4 operations has been prosecuted and sentenced by the Mexican justice system — his sentence was a small fine. Another 16 policemen were exonerated of ‘abuse of authority’, four policemen are under investigation, and nine were subject to disciplinary sanctions shortly after the incident. The federal authorities have consistently refused to carry out a full investigation of violations committed by state or federal officers, and no senior official has been held to account.

## SPEAK OUT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS!

Please send politely worded letters calling for an effective and impartial investigation into the torture and ill-treatment suffered by Bárbara Italia Méndez and the other women. Call for the federal criminal prosecution of all those responsible.

**A sample letter is available online at:**  
[www.amnestyusa.org/mexicoletter.htm](http://www.amnestyusa.org/mexicoletter.htm)

**For more information, go to:**  
[www.amnestyusa.org/mendez](http://www.amnestyusa.org/mendez)

### Send letters to:

LIC. FELIPE DE JESÚS CALDERÓN HINOJOSA  
PRESIDENTE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS  
RESIDENCIA OFICIAL DE “LOS PINOS”  
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