

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
In care of the Embassy of Mexico in the United States
1911 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20006

25 September 2019

Dear Minister Ebrard,

We write to express our ongoing concern regarding the unresolved case of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Mexico who were forcibly disappeared while in the custody of Mexican security forces five years ago on September 26, 2014. We recognize that since taking office last December, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has made resolving the Ayotzinapa case a priority for his administration, and that his government has taken significant steps to strengthen support for the families of the victims.

We believe that the president's creation of a Commission for Truth and Justice to supervise the Ayotzinapa case—chaired by Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez, the Undersecretary for Human Rights and Migration—represents an important step to move the case forward. We particularly commend the important role given to the victims' families and the civil society organizations that legally represent them in the Commission, as this provides the families with a direct mode of participation in the case.

We also commend the fact that the Mexican government has welcomed the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to provide additional international assistance and oversight for the case. We note that this includes the involvement of members of the IACHR's Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) that gave important technical assistance in the investigation from 2015 to 2016. We believe this international engagement is paramount for continuing with the investigation into the students' disappearance and for monitoring ongoing inquiries into possible irregularities and obstruction of justice committed by public officials within the former Attorney General's Office (*Procuraduría General de la República*, PGR) during the original Ayotzinapa investigation. This includes the alleged arbitrary detention and torture of dozens of suspects to coerce confessions.

We were also pleased to learn about the June 2019 creation of a Special Investigation and Litigation Unit for the Ayotzinapa Case within the FGR to continue with the investigation into the whereabouts of the students and those responsible for this crime. We understand that the families of the victims and the civil society organizations accompanying them have widely welcomed the appointment of Omar Gómez Trejo to lead the Special Unit. It is our hope that, going forward, Mr. Gómez Trejo and the Special Unit are given the resources and autonomy needed to advance in the investigation.

While we applaud recent progress made in the Ayotzinapa case, we are concerned by the lack of any convictions for those responsible for this crime and the recent absolution of a key suspect in the case given the irregularities in the evidence presented against him, including evidence obtained through torture. We further note that this case is only one of more than 47,000 registered disappearance cases in the country. We remain concerned that the vast majority of these cases remain unresolved, with most victims still missing. We recognize the Mexican government's commitment to fully implementing the General Law on Disappearances passed in 2017, supporting the work of the National Search Commission, and addressing the national emergency in the forensic examination of human remains in the country.

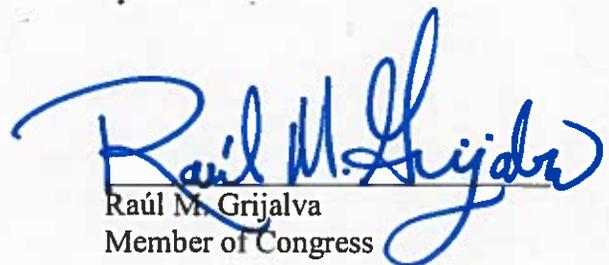
In this regard, families of the disappeared and Mexican human rights organizations have expressed to staffers from several of our congressional offices areas where the United States can support Mexico's efforts to address disappearances. This includes providing additional forensic assistance for identifying the more than 26,000 human remains and tens of thousands of bone fragments that have been recovered from clandestine graves throughout the country, as well as technical assistance for implementing the 2017 disappearances law. We welcome a conversation with Mexican officials about these possible avenues of collaboration.

As the Mexican government works to address this disappearances crisis, we are committed to supporting this important effort to bring truth and justice to the families of the 43 forcibly disappeared students from Ayotzinapa and the thousands of other families across the country desperately searching for answers about the fate of their missing loved ones. We recognize and appreciate Mexico as an important neighbor and ally, and we remain committed to working with the Mexican government to promote respect for human rights in both of our countries.

Sincerely,



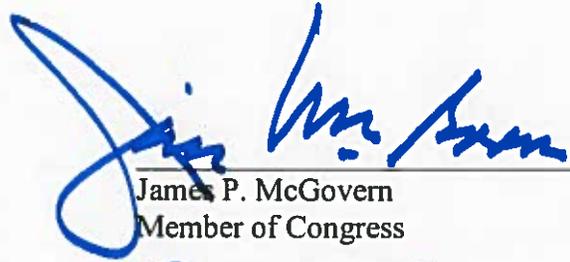
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



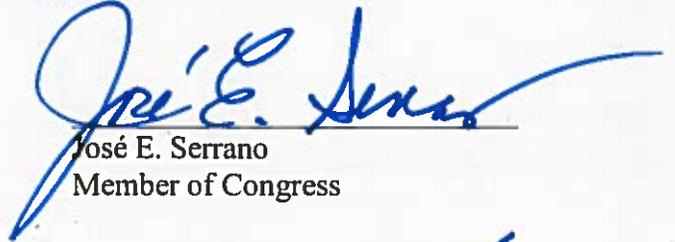
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Jesús "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

CC: Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez, Undersecretary for Human Rights and Migration, Ministry of the Interior

Sara Irene Herrerías Guerra, Special Prosecutor for Human Rights, National Prosecutor's Office
Ambassador Martha Bárcena Coqui, Embassy of Mexico in the United States