

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 25, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our profound concern over the forced disappearance of 43 students in the State of Guerrero, Mexico on September 26, 2014. As we approach the first anniversary of this tragic event, we ask that you use diplomatic channels to emphasize to Mexican officials the importance of continuing to advance their investigation into these disappearances and encourage them to implement the recommendations outlined in the September 6, 2015 report by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (Experts) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The United States and Mexico are linked by geography, trade, common interests, and vibrant Mexican-American communities in the United States that maintain close ties with their families and friends in Mexico. Events that transpire in Mexico often reverberate in communities throughout the United States. When a tragedy takes place, such as that which occurred in Guerrero last September, it matters not just to U.S. officials, but to many of our constituents as well.

We commend the political will displayed by the Mexican government in supporting the creation of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts to review the case, provide technical assistance on the investigation, and present recommendations. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned by the Experts' report, which revealed procedural errors and troubling discrepancies between the report's findings and the government's official account of the students' disappearance.

For instance, the Experts highlight the fact that some evidence was mishandled and lost during the official investigation, and question several conclusions originally advanced by the investigating prosecutors. The report challenges the government's assertion that the students were cremated at the Cocula landfill, citing analysis from an internationally-recognized fire specialist who concluded that there was a lack of forensic evidence to substantiate the theory.

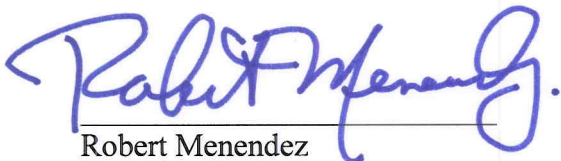
The Experts propose new lines of inquiry, calling for a review of the purported motives for the attack and further analysis of the use of buses to transport narcotics in the region. The Experts also recommend additional questioning of individual members of the security forces, including the Mexican army, who were present in the area of the attacks in order to determine if sufficient steps were taken to fulfill their role in protecting the citizenry.

We support the Experts' recommendations, and appreciate the Mexican government's decision to seriously consider the findings and recommendations. We also commend the Mexican government's decision to approve an extension of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts' mandate, so they may continue their important work.

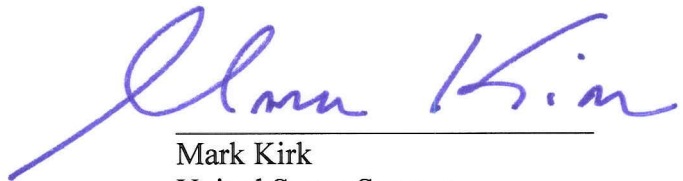
Finally, we remain deeply concerned that the incident in Guerrero is symptomatic of the larger, endemic problem of missing and disappeared persons in Mexico. While the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts shed new light on the investigation of the 43 students, there are more than 25,000 people who have disappeared or went missing over the past decade and remain unaccounted for.

We will continue to closely follow the investigation of the case of the 43 students and the issue of forced disappearances in Mexico. It is imperative that the United States stand in partnership with efforts to ensure justice in these cases and help bring closure to victims' families. We ask that you provide us with regular updates regarding the U.S. government's engagement on these issues.

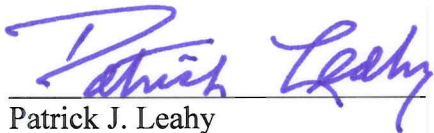
Sincerely,



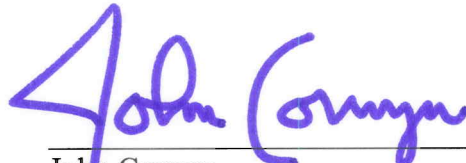
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Mark Kirk
United States Senator



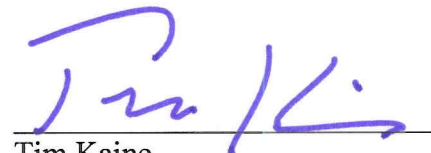
Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



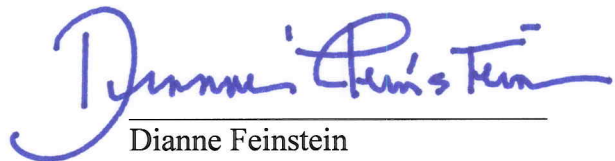
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



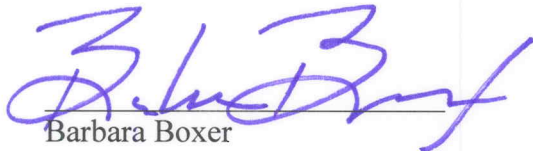
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



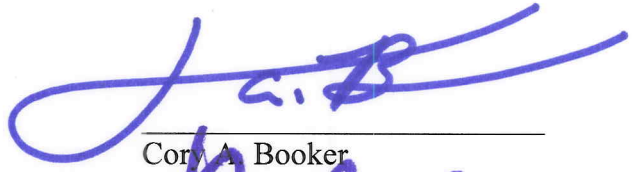
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



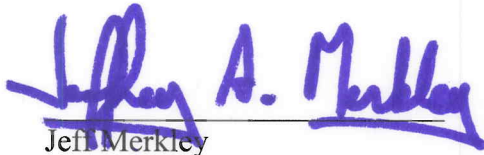
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



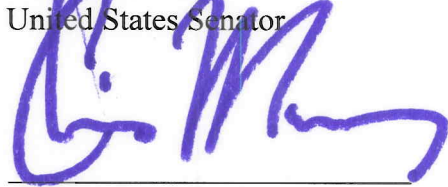
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Roberta Jacobson
Assistance Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520