

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 3, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our continued concern over the forced disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Mexico on September 26, 2014 and the Mexican government's investigation into the incident. This September marks the second anniversary of this tragic event. We ask that you continue to use diplomatic channels to urge Mexican officials to fully investigate their disappearance, implement the recommendations outlined in the two reports issued by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and cooperate with the follow-up mechanism to the work of the GIEI,

As we have noted before, the United States and Mexico are linked by geography, common values, and actively engaged Mexican-American communities that maintain close ties with their family and friends in Mexico. Many of our constituents are intently watching this ongoing investigation and have taken great interest in how the Mexican government will continue their thorough investigation on behalf of 43 students, their families and the other victims of the September 2014 attacks.

We recognize the Mexican government for the political will and efforts put into the investigation thus far, including inviting independent experts to provide technical support and dedicating significant human and financial resources for the investigation. However, we remain concerned about reports from human rights advocates that the Mexican Government failed to fully cooperate with GIEI experts and to provide access to all relevant case files, witnesses, and suspects. Likewise, when the GIEI experts faced a series of defamation campaigns in the media, the government did not appear to wholeheartedly support the very experts it welcomed to perform these duties.

We remain deeply concerned that the case of the students and ongoing challenges in the investigation are symptomatic of a larger endemic problem of disappeared persons in Mexico. There are still more steps to be taken before closing what Mexican authorities have called "the most exhaustive prosecutorial investigation in the history of Mexico." We urge the State Department to encourage the Mexican government to fulfil this commitment and to support their efforts.

It is troubling that two years have passed since the students disappeared, and yet their whereabouts remain unknown and no criminal convictions have resulted. While official accounts

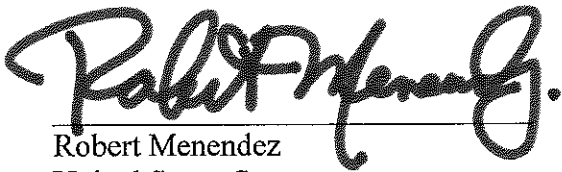
suggest that the 43 students were handed over to a criminal organization and taken to a nearby trash dump where they were killed and their remains burned, forensic evidence corroborated by the GIEI and the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF) has discredited this narrative. This crucial discrepancy must be resolved and authorities must produce thorough and credible results.

The GIEI revealed that the attacks against the students involved multiple, complex, and coordinated actions between government officials and members of criminal organizations. The GIEI points out that the attacks happened in the context of hundreds of other disappearances related to transnational trafficking by criminal organization in Guerrero. In addition, the GIEI uncovered irregularities in the Attorney General's investigation. The Attorney General must fully investigate whether there was any obstruction of justice by authorities in this case, and hold those responsible accountable.

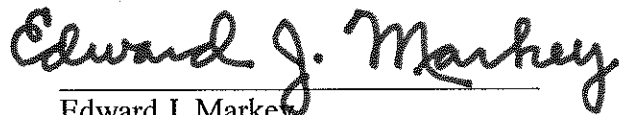
As you know, on July 29, 2016 the IACHR, the students' families, and the Mexican government agreed to a follow up mechanism to the Experts' work. We commend the establishment of this mechanism and hope that all parties will fully cooperate with the Commission to resolve the Ayotzinapa case. Fulfilling this mandate will highlight Mexico's adherence to the rule of law and credibility before its citizens and the international community. Moreover, IACHR's technical assistance in the Ayotzinapa case serves as an important contribution to this case and one that can serve as model for international assistance in complex cases of grave human rights violations. With political will from the host country and a commitment to holding human rights violators accountable, these models can open paths to new ways of engagement in the region to ensure respect for human rights.

We will continue to closely follow the investigation 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 victim's families, and we appreciate your efforts to far in this regard. We ask that you provide us with regular updates regarding the U.S. government's engagement on these issues and on the Mexican government's progress in fulfilling its commitment to see justice done.

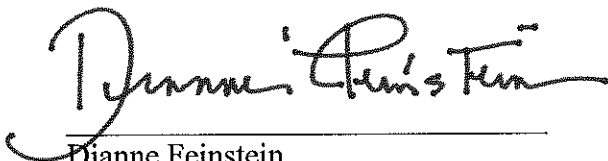
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



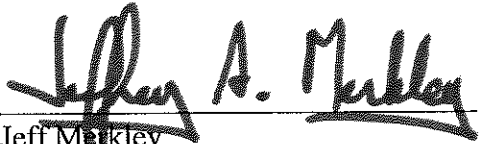
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



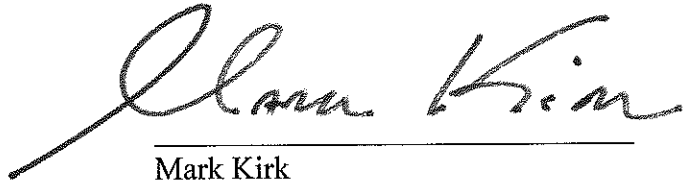
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



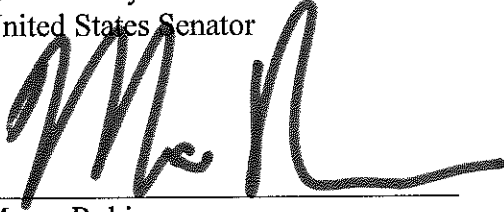
Cory Booker  
United States Senator



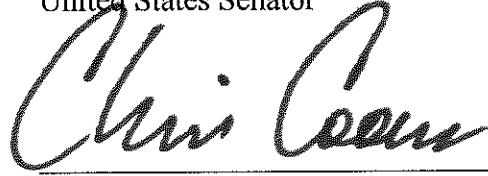
Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator



Mark Kirk  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator