

***Cordially invite you to an international
seminar on***

Human Rights and Transitional Justice in Mexico

Date and time: Thursday, 20 September 2018 (9:30-13:00)

Venue: KU Leuven - Campus Brussels (Hermesbuilding 1, Stormstraat 2, 1000 Brussel) – room 3112

Background

In late 2006, former president Felipe Calderon launched the so-called “war on drugs” in Mexico, which implied the militarisation of public security functions and anti-drug measures. This strategy, which has been continued by outgoing president Enrique Peña Nieto, led to an alarming escalation of violence with an unprecedented number of direct and indirect victims. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed, arbitrarily deprived of liberty, forcibly disappeared, tortured and forcibly displaced. A number of United Nations Special Rapporteurs and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have expressed concern over the generalized nature of extrajudicial executions, torture and enforced disappearances at the hands of security forces in a context of “structural” impunity.¹

Civil society organisations and victims in Mexico have long highlighted these abuses and are calling for the adoption of a set of transitional justice measures aimed at strengthening institutions and end pervasive impunity in order for justice to be possible. This requires proper investigations of crimes related to serious violations of human rights, particularly those that are committed in a systematic and generalised manner in the context of the current security policy, as well as those linked to corruption. The newly elected government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, which will take office in December 2018, has expressed the intention of adopting certain “transitional justice” measures in order to address the country’s human rights crisis. However, in a context of ongoing violence, the adoption and implementation of any measures will face important obstacles. In addition, the unique nature of violence and the conflict in Mexico will require unique measures of “justice” that must consider both historic and present-day realities.

The aim of this seminar is to increase understanding of the human rights situation on the ground in Mexico with the presence of a Mexican NGO, while also examining the possibilities and challenges for the adoption of transitional justice mechanisms and how these could contribute to alleviating the current human rights crisis and strengthen the rule of law in Mexico.

¹ Christof Heyns, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions in Follow-up to His Mission to Mexico’ (Human Rights Council 2016) A/HRC/32/39/Add.2., §50.

Programme

9:15 Registration of participants

9:30 Welcome

Silvana Mandolessi, KU Leuven

9:45 Introduction: The human rights situation in Mexico: why think about transitional justice?

Lene Guercke, KU Leuven

10:15 The systematic and generalized causes of impunity in cases of crimes against humanity and corruption in Mexico

Maria Corina Muskus, Mexican Commission for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights

10:45 An International Mechanism to Combat Impunity in Mexico: How can an International Mechanism strengthen the rule of law in Mexico? Objectives, jurisdiction, location, structure, personal, finance and supervision

Kersty McCourt, Open Society Foundations, Brussels

11:15 Health break

11:30 Key points to embark on a transitional justice project: Obstacles and lessons learned

Santa Falasca, International Centre for Transitional Justice, Brussels

12:00 The role of the European Union in supporting transitional justice measures in Mexico

To be confirmed

12:30 Panel debate

Moderator: *Miguel Zumalacárregui, World Organisation Against Torture*

13:00 Closing remarks

Light lunch

Registration

The seminar is free of charge but limited seating capacity is available and registration is compulsory. Please **confirm your participation by Monday 17 September 2018** by sending an email to tessa.tsjoen@law.kuleuven.be (including your surname, first name and institutional affiliation).

For more information, please contact: lene.guercke@kuleuven.be

Organisation

The seminar is a joint initiative of the Leuven Institute of Criminology (Prof. Stephan Parmentier, LINC - www.law.kuleuven.be/linc), and the European Research Council project “Digital Memories” (www.digitalmemories.be) (Prof. Silvana Mandolessi), in collaboration with the Mexican Commission for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (<http://cmdpdh.org>).

It is organised under the auspices of the Fund on Transitional Justice, an initiative of the Research Line on Human Rights and Transitional Justice at the Leuven Institute of Criminology and administered by the KU Leuven University Fund. Established in 2015 the Fund is encouraging and developing research and activities on transitional justice in post-conflict situations mostly in the Global South, with a long-term aim to promote sustainable peace and development. Particular attention is devoted to models of reparative justice and restorative justice that focus on harm reduction for victims and other stakeholders, as well as the (re-) construction of societies that are conflict-ridden.

With the support of Intersentia Publishers (Cambridge/Antwerp), the Fund on Transitional Justice (KU Leuven), and the European Research Council.

