

Press Release

Inter-American Court of Human Rights
I/A Court H.R._PR-04/2022 English

Should you have any trouble viewing this message, please click [HERE](#)



I/A Court H.R. Protecting Rights

MEXICO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SERIOUS FAILURES IN THE INVESTIGATION OF THE DEATH OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DIGNA OCHOA

San José, Costa Rica, January 19, 2022. In the Judgment notified today of the *Case of Digna Ochoa and relatives v. Mexico*, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found Mexico internationally responsible for the serious shortcomings that took place in the investigation of the death of the human rights defender Digna Ochoa y Plácido on October 19, 2001. The State made a partial acknowledgment of international responsibility in the case.

You may access the official summary of the Judgment [here](#) and the complete text of the Judgment [here](#).

Regarding the investigation into the death, as the Court indicated and the State recognized, there were numerous shortcomings in the handling of the crime scene, especially in its documentation and in the forensic autopsy. Moreover, the Court found that the investigation into the circumstances of Mrs. Ochoa's death was biased from the beginning by the application of gender stereotypes, where intimate and personal aspects of the defender were relied upon with the purpose of questioning her credibility. Additionally, it concluded that Mexico also violated the reasonable time for the investigation of the facts. The Court also indicated that, as a result of the deficient investigation and the discourse of state agents aimed at insulting her public image, the defender's right to honor and dignity was also prejudiced.

The Court also concluded that the death of Mrs. Digna Ochoa took place in a generalized context of impunity for the murders of human rights defenders at the time of the events in this case in Mexico and that it was preceded by years of threats made against her. This, in addition to the *absolutely deficient* investigation of her death by the Mexican authorities, did not shed light on the particular circumstances surrounding her death and, therefore, in itself, constituted a violation of the obligation to guarantee the right to life of Mrs. Digna Ochoa. In addition, her relatives' right to the truth was violated.

The Court ordered the State to adopt various measures of reparation, including (i) to advance and continue the investigations necessary to determine the circumstances of the death of Mrs. Digna Ochoa and, as appropriate, prosecute and eventually punish the person or persons responsible for her death; (ii) carry out a public act of acknowledgment of international responsibility; (iii) create an award for the defense of human rights that will bear the name *Digna Ochoa y Plácido*; (iv) design and implement a campaign to recognize the work of human rights defenders; (v) give the name *Digna Ochoa y Plácido* to a street in the city of Misantla, state of Veracruz, as well as in Mexico City; (vi) prepare a scheduled strengthening plan for the *Mechanism for Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists*; (vii) create and implement a *Protection Mechanism for Witnesses involved in the Criminal Proceedings*; (viii) prepare, present and promote a constitutional reform initiative to provide autonomy and independence to Expert

Services; (ix) prepare, present and promote an initiative to reform the *Federal Law for the Protection of Persons involved in Criminal Proceedings* so that it “includes the international parameters and standards on the matter for the creation and effective operation of a Witness Protection Mechanism”; (x) create and implement at the federal level a specific and specialized protocol for the investigation of attacks against human rights defenders; (xi) carry out a training plan for research personnel on the aforementioned protocol, as well as the creation of a system of indicators that allow the protocol’s effectiveness to be measured.

The Court’s composition for the issuance of this Judgment was as follows: Judge Elizabeth Odio Benito, President (Costa Rica), Judge Patricio Pazmiño Freire, Vice President (Ecuador), Judge Eduardo Vio Grossi (Chile), Judge Humberto Antonio Sierra Porto (Colombia), Judge Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni (Argentina), and Judge Ricardo Pérez Manrique (Uruguay).

As a Mexican national, Judge Eduardo Ferrer Mac-Gregor Poisot did not participate in the deliberation of this Judgment, in accordance with Art. 19 of the Court’s Rules of Procedure.

This press release was produced by the Secretariat of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which is the only responsible for its content.

For the latest information please visit the website of the Inter-American Court, <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/index-en.cfm>, or send an email to Pablo Saavedra Alessandri, Secretary, at corteidh@corteidh.or.cr. For press inquiries please contact Matías Ponce at prensa@corteidh.or.cr.

You can subscribe to the information services of the Court [here](#). You can sign up for updates from the Court here or unsubscribe sending an email to comunicaciones@corteidh.or.cr. You can also follow the activities of the Court on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) (@CorteIDH for the Spanish account and @IACourtHR for the English account), [Instagram](#), [Flickr](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Soundcloud](#).

[Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#), 2022. 

Esta obra está bajo una [Licencia Creative Commons Atribución-NoComercial-SinDerivadas 3.0 Unported](#)

Avenida 10, Calles 45 y 47 Los Yoses, San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica.