



International Fair Trial Day

# 2023 International Fair Trial Day and Ebru Timtik Award

Mexico Edition  
Event Report



14 June 2023

Institute of Legal Research, National Autonomous University of Mexico

The Organising Committee of the 2023 International Fair Trial Day and Ebru Timtik Award consists of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD); Bologna Bar Association; Défense Sans Frontière Avocats Solidaires (DSF-AS); European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH); European Bars Federation (FBE); European Democratic Lawyers (EDL-AED); French National Bar Council (CNB); International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL); Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL); International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI); International Commission of Jurists (ICJ); Italian National Bar Council (CNF); International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (OIAD); Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW); Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L); Nantes Bar Association; Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD); and Republikanischer Anwältenund Anwälteverein e V (RAV).

The Organising Committee would like to thank the following local bar associations for their support:

Ilustre Nacional Colegio de Abogados de México (INCAM)  
Asociación Nacional de Abogados de Empresa (ANADE)  
Barra Mexicana, Colegio de Abogados (BMA)  
Consejo General de la Abogacía Mexicana (CGAM)

A full recording of the conference can be found online in [\*\*English, Spanish and Turkish\*\*](#).

The conference was livestreamed on the Mexican Supreme Court website.

# THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE



# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Keynote speeches</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Setting the scene: systemic fair trial rights concerns in Mexico</b>	<b>12</b>
Regulatory problems	12
Lack of institutional capacity and unequal budgetary allocation	12
Spotlight: pre-trial detention	13
<b>Enforced disappearances and torture</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Attacks against the independence of the judiciary</b>	<b>17</b>
Case study: Judge Angelica Sanchez Hernández	19
Spotlight: the state of Chiapas	20
The cost of unequal access to justice	21
<i>Criminalising dissent</i>	21
<i>The cost to women</i>	22
<i>The cost to indigenous peoples</i>	23
Case study: Fernández Ortega et al v Mexico, Inter-American Court of Human Rights	24
<b>2023 Ebru Timtik Award</b>	<b>26</b>
About the award	26
The 2023 Awards Ceremony	27
2023 award winners	28
<b>Annex: event agenda and speakers' bios</b>	<b>28</b>

# INTRODUCTION

On 14 June 2023, around 300 legal professionals, bar association representatives and human rights advocates from around the world gathered online and in person in Mexico City to participate in the 2023 Mexico edition of the International Fair Trial Day and Ebru Timtik Award (IFTD) at the premises of the Institute of Legal Research of UNAM University in Mexico City.

International Fair Trial Day was established in 2021 by more than 100 legal associations across the world, to be observed every year on 14 June. It serves as an opportunity to raise awareness of the plight of those in countries where fair trial principles are not being respected. The right to a fair trial has long been recognised by the international community as a fundamental human right. Without a fair trial, every individual risks becoming the victim of a miscarriage of justice, either as an innocent suspect wrongly convicted or as a victim unable to secure justice for a wrong perpetrated against them.

The Ebru Timtik Award is granted annually to individuals or organisations that have demonstrated outstanding commitment and sacrifice in upholding fundamental values related to the right to a fair trial. The award is named after a Turkish lawyer who died in August 2020 following a 238-day hunger strike in protest against the fair trial rights violations in her country, which Ebru Timtik experienced first-hand both as a lawyer and as an accused.

A different country of focus is selected for each yearly edition of the IFTD. For the 2023 IFTD, Mexico was selected as the focus country due to widespread reports of systemic fair trial rights violations in its justice system, including shortfalls in ensuring due process guarantees, ineffective and delayed investigations and trials, discrimination, corruption and improper government influence over the judiciary. While Mexico is defined overall as a partially free country in the Freedom in the World Report by Freedom House (with a 60/100 ranking),<sup>1</sup> it is precisely rule of law-related factors in the assessment that downgrade Mexico's ranking. Torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings remain some of the most acute problems facing the country.

The full-day conference started with an opening ceremony that featured Carolina Villadiego Burbano, Latin America Team Leader of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ); Arturo Pueblita Fernández, President of the Ilustre y Nacional Colegio de Abogados de México (INCAM); and Mónica González Contró, Director of the Institute of Legal Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Following the opening ceremony, three high-level keynotes set the tone for the subsequent discussion, which was articulated in three topical panels. The conference ended with the Ebru Timtik Awards Ceremony and closing remarks from Ayşe Bingöl Demir, Director of the Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project at the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH).

The 2023 IFTD brought together a variety of stakeholders from different countries and from different regions in Mexico: lawyers, members of the judiciary, legal practitioners, experts, academics, human rights defenders and victims.

---

1 Freedom House, 'Mexico,' *Freedom House* <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mexico/freedom-world/2023> accessed 2 February 2024.

The Ebru Timtik Award was awarded to **Alicia de los Rios Merino** for her work in seeking justice for the more than 100,000 disappeared persons in Mexico, and **Ana Yeli Perez Garrido** for her work representing women who have been the victims of torture, sexual and family violence, and femicide.

This report is based on the insights shared by panellists during the 2023 IFTD. Therefore, the conclusions within this document are drawn from the perspectives shared by speakers during the conference, reflecting their personal opinions based on individual knowledge and experience. It is important to note that these perspectives may not necessarily align with the official views of the endorsing institutions.

The findings presented in this report are current up until 14 June 2023. Since that date, some relevant events have transpired that are not accounted for in the report. These subsequent developments may impact the context and understanding of some of the subject matter.

## Keynote speeches

Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights Judge Ricardo Perez Manrique and United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Professor Margaret Satterthwaite delivered keynote speeches.

Commissioner Arosemena de Troitiño lauded the progress made by Mexico over the past decade, including major reforms to the criminal justice system. Great expectations followed the 2014 Constitutional reform for the creation of the General Prosecution Office in Mexico (Fiscalía General de la República) with federal jurisdiction, separate from the executive branch, to solve the problem of the lack of independence and effectiveness of the previous Prosecutor General's Office. Further efforts to reform the system were sparked by public knowledge of acts of obstruction of justice in the framework of the *Ayotzinapa case*<sup>2</sup>. Most of the achievements that were met in those years are attributable to the dignified fights carried out by victims, their families and the human rights organisations that accompanied them in their journey to justice.

---

2 See Case study, page 7

## CASE STUDY – The Ayotzinapa case

The Ayotzinapa case concerns the mysterious disappearance of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teacher Training College on the night of 26 September 2014. They had been arrested by municipal police while preparing to participate in a demonstration in Mexico City commemorating the anniversary of the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre. Despite significant pressure from global and domestic fronts, as well as from the families of the missing students, the facts remain unclear. According to the investigation carried out in the aftermath of the students' disappearance, municipal officers apprehended them and transported them to the police station in Cocula. Allegations suggest that corrupt police officials then surrendered them to Guerreros Unidos, a local drug gang. The gang purportedly transported the students to a rubbish dump in Cocula, where they were murdered and incinerated. Their remains were subsequently disposed of in a nearby stream, according to the report<sup>3</sup>.

The initial report and the entire investigation have been discredited after new evidence emerged. In 2018, president López Obrador established the Commission

for Truth and Access to Justice in the Ayotzinapa Case (COVAJ), entrusted with the mandate to investigate the disappearance. The report published by the COVAJ concluded that the disappearance of the 43 students was a state crime.

In August 2022, arrest warrants were issued at the request of the Attorney General's Office against the former Public Prosecutor, military commanders, police officials and members of the group Guerreros Unidos for the crimes of enforced disappearance, torture and against the administration of justice<sup>4</sup>.

At Inter-American level, in July 2016, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights created the Special Follow-up Mechanism for the Ayotzinapa Case (MESA), with the objective of following up on the terms of the IACHR Resolution of Precautionary Measure 409/14, and on the recommendations of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) formulated in its two reports. MESA works closely with the families of the 43 missing students, and it produces monitoring reports with relevant recommendations<sup>5</sup>.

Nonetheless, human rights violations during the investigations and bureaucratic inertia within the Mexican legal system at large continue to effectively restrict victims' access to justice. Commissioner Arosemena de Troitiño reported that, at the date of the Conference, 94 per cent of the crimes committed in Mexico had not been denounced, and only one per cent had been properly investigated. Implementing the guarantees for due process enshrined in Article 8 of the American Convention on Human Rights is not only the responsibility of the courts but must also irradiate the entire process, reaching all the authorities that are involved in the delivery of justice, as outlined in the IACtHR jurisprudence on Article 8. Due process guarantees also foresee the right for victims and family members to have their voices heard in the process, to be allowed to submit evidence and not to have excessive dilatations in investigations. All these rights were lacking in the case concerning the murder of Digna Ochoa,<sup>6</sup> where 20 years had to go by before proper investigations took place.

3 Vanessa Buschschlüter, 'Mexico missing students: Knowns and unknowns' (BBC News, 25 August 2022) [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-35539727](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-35539727) accessed 2 February 2024)

4 (Amnesty International, 'Mexico: Progress in investigation into the disappearance of 43 Ayotzinapa students renews hope for truth and justice' (Amnesty International, 20 August 2022) [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/disappearance-of-43-ayotzinapa-students](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/disappearance-of-43-ayotzinapa-students) accessed 2 February 2024).

5 (OAS, 'Follow-Up Mechanism to the Ayotzinapa Case (MESA)' [www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/IACHR/GIEI/Ayotzinapa/MESA/default.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/IACHR/GIEI/Ayotzinapa/MESA/default.asp) accessed 2 February 2024)

6 See Case Study under page 9





Photo: Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights

Judge Manrique highlighted the need for strong institutions to effectively safeguard human rights and called for persistence in the fight against discrimination and social exclusion. The Sustainable Development Goals set forth clear objectives to be reached by 2030, and in this context, the IACtHR has a crucial role when it comes to demanding a better and more efficient administration of justice. Since the first ruling on the topic, in the *Case of the Garífuna Community of Triunfo de la Cruz and its members v*

## CASE STUDY – The murder of prominent human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa

Digna Ochoa, an activist for the defence of human rights in Mexico affiliated with the 'Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez' Human Rights Center (PRODH), was murdered on 19 October 2001, just two months after temporary protections in her favour were removed. Before her killing, Ochoa faced numerous threats and abductions due to her activism in defending human rights in Mexico. Consequently, in 1999, Ochoa petitioned for precautionary measures before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and later sought provisional measures before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights due to ongoing threats and attacks against her and PRODH. Approximately two years later, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights revoked the provisional measures granted to Ochoa and other members of PRODH. Shortly thereafter, Ochoa was assassinated. The investigation into her death, led by the Attorney General's Office of the Federal District, concluded it was a suicide, prompting the closure of the case. The case was then brought to the Inter-American System of Human Rights, with allegations of ineffective investigations presented before the commission. In 2013, a hearing was conducted, resulting in the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights issuing an admissibility report on the case for its subsequent decision. The commission held the Mexican state responsible for the human rights violations against Ochoa's relatives and mandated a series of measures

to redress the harm caused and prevent recurrence. However, due to insufficient progress in implementing these measures, the case was referred to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights<sup>7</sup>. In 2021, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

'determined that the investigation and prosecution of the death of Digna Ochoa failed to comply with the standards for due diligence; that gender stereotypes obstructed the proceedings; that the reasonable time was not respected and, also, that public statements were made during the investigation that harmed the honour and dignity of Digna Ochoa. All this also violated the right to the truth of Digna Ochoa's family. Furthermore, Digna Ochoa's death occurred in the context of an increasing number of killings of human rights defenders, accompanied by a generalised situation of impunity with regard to this type of crime, and was preceded by numerous threats against her and her colleagues.'

As a consequence, the court condemned Mexico for violating the right to life, the guarantees of judicial protection<sup>8</sup>. In addition, the judgment ordered the state to reinforce its 'Protection Mechanisms for human rights defenders and journalists', and to adopt and implement 'a specific protocol for investigating attacks against human rights defenders'<sup>9</sup>.

7 Center for Justice and International Law, 'Digna Ochoa', *Center for Justice and International Law* <https://cejil.org/en/case/digna-ochoa-2> accessed 4 February 2024)

8 Right to honour and dignity of human rights defenders (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case of Digna Ochoa et al v México*, Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of 25 November 2021, Series C No 447, b 6, Conclusion, paras 148–149)

9 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case of Digna Ochoa et al v México*, Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of 25 November 2021, Series C No 447, E, Guarantees of non-repetition, paras 177–178).

*Honduras*,<sup>10</sup> the IACtHR specified that each ratifying country must ensure fair trials to protect the rights of victims. New challenges to the protection of human rights are posed by the advent of artificial intelligence, along with the need to prioritise the environmental cause.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Professor Satterthwaite noted that the right to a fair trial, as provided by Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, is central to the protection of all other human rights and is increasingly at risk. The World Justice Project reports that 2022 was the fifth year in a row witnessing a rule of law decline in most countries, with checks on government power falling in 58 per cent of countries and respect for core human rights and freedoms falling in two-thirds of the countries.<sup>11</sup> This is in the context of an alarming wider trend of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism worldwide.

A few examples of cases that the Special Rapporteur has covered during her mandate, that started in November 2022, include Hong Kong's National Security Law legislation, banning foreign lawyers from proceedings in Hong Kong; trials in absentia in Belarus and the deprivation of citizenship of Belarussians abroad; counterterrorism legislation in Sri Lanka that does not foresee effective judicial oversight and effective access to counsel; and the continuous extensions of the state of emergency in El Salvador, along with amendments to the penal code to address gang violence that increase the incarceration rate and make use of mass hearings.

It is a duty of both the bench and the bar to ensure that the independence of each category is protected, as the right to a fair trial rests on such independence. The Special Rapporteur closed her speech by calling conferences like the IFTD crucial in focusing attention on the need to protect the right to a fair trial in every country.

---

**“ It is a duty of both the bench and the bar to ensure that the independence of each category is protected, as the right to a fair trial rests on such independence.**

*UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Professor Satterthwaite*

---

10 Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Case of the *Garifuna Triunfo de la Cruz Community and its Members v Honduras*. Merits, Reparations, and Costs, Judgment of 8 October 2015, Series C No 305. The rural indigenous community of Garífuna Triunfo de la Cruz, residing in Honduras, was granted ownership of several portions of their ancestral lands by the state from the 1940s to the 2000s. Despite this, the state failed to respect the autonomy of the indigenous community's land by allowing urban expansion, industrial and tourism development, and establishing a national park on their territory. As a result, the court determined that the state violated the American Convention on Human Rights in relation to the following obligations and rights: obligation to respect rights, obligation of non-discrimination, obligation to give domestic legal effect to rights, right to a fair trial, right to a hearing within reasonable time by a competent and independent tribunal, right to property and right to judicial protection.

11 World Justice Project, 'Rule of Law Index 2022', *World Justice Project*, Washington, DC, 2022, Rule of Law Index® 2022 accessed 5 February 2024.

# SETTING THE SCENE: SYSTEMIC FAIR TRIAL RIGHTS CONCERNS IN MEXICO

## Regulatory problems

As highlighted by Dr Pedro Salazar of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the first obstacle for a just and effective administration of justice lies in the complex regulatory design that characterises the Mexican jurisdiction. This originates from the Mexican Constitution itself that became three times longer than the original version from 1917. An example is Article 41, regulating electoral matters, that originally had 63 words and now has more than 400. Federalism, in such a context, makes legislation even more complex also for legal experts. For citizens, this translates into uncertainty, and a feeling of impunity and vulnerability at the same time. The regulatory framework in Mexico is not only complex, but also volatile since changes of legislation are regular.



Panelists Laurence Pantin (L) and Pedro Salazar (R) with moderator Fernando Hernández Gómez (C)

## Lack of institutional capacity and unequal budgetary allocation

Multiple IFTD panellists pointed to a lack of institutional capacity, coupled with unequal budgetary allocation, as facilitating factors for impunity. Dr Salazar emphasised how funding gaps between states within Mexico have translated to major staffing issues in certain judicial offices. There are states where ‘there are no investigative police departments; there is no institutional capacity; there are no professionals’.



Panellist Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez of the Foundation for Justice and the Democratic Rule of Law noted that, in 2008, when Mexico adopted constitutional reform to the criminal justice system to shift it from written inquisitorial to oral adversarial, not enough consideration was given to the need to build the capacity of prosecutorial institutions to investigate. Investigative forces lack the coordination or competency to properly investigate sophisticated criminal networks. A need for clear standards for public prosecution was highlighted, including safeguards for prosecutors to be independent from the executive branch. Moreover, external control mechanisms that are functional are needed to establish a system of checks and balances.

---

**““** In Mexico, it is more dangerous to investigate a crime than to commit one.

*Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez*

## Spotlight: pre-trial detention

Article 19 of the Mexican Constitution requires judges to impose pre-trial detention on suspects accused of specific crimes, including homicide, rape and firearms offences. The constitutional amendment was included in 2008 and has since been expanded to include non-violent crimes such as abuse of authority and corruption.

The practice has been condemned by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention,<sup>12</sup> the Inter-American Court and Commission of Human Rights, as well as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee Against Torture. Critics argue that it contravenes basic elements of the Rule of Law, such as judicial independence and the presumption of innocence.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the lengthy period between detention and trial can mean that a defendant can spend more than a decade in prison as he/she waits to be given the possibility to defend him/herself in court.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has repeatedly ordered Mexico to change its pre-trial detention laws.<sup>14</sup> The pressing necessity to comply with the measures mandated by the Inter-American Court conflicts with the Mexican state's resistance on this matter. President Obrador's government members, including military officials, openly condemned judges for releasing individuals accused of crimes. Specifically, the president and his cabinet have consistently supported mandatory pre-trial detention, arguing that this is an essential crime-fighting tool and it is necessary to remove the decision of whether or not to detain defendants from judges' jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup>

---

12 The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, 'Mexico should overturn mandatory pre-trial detention: UN experts', Press release, 5 September 2022 [www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/mexico-should-overturn-mandatory-pre-trial-detention-un-experts](http://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/mexico-should-overturn-mandatory-pre-trial-detention-un-experts) accessed 5 February 2024.

13 See, eg, Paola I Rosa Rodríguez, 'Criminal Justice, Due Process and the Rule of Law in Mexico' (2019) 11.2 Mexican Law Review 147–171.

14 Mexico News Daily, 'IAHCR orders Mexico to change laws on preventive detentions' (Mexico News Daily, 13 April 2023) <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/iahcr-orders-mexico-preventative-detentions> accessed 5 February 2024.

15 Stephanie Brewer, 'International Ruling Finds Mexico's Legal Framework on Detentions Violates Human Rights' (Washington Office on Latin America, 23 February 2023) [www.wola.org/analysis/international-ruling-finds-mexico-detentions-violates-human-rights](http://www.wola.org/analysis/international-ruling-finds-mexico-detentions-violates-human-rights) accessed 5 February 2024.

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND TORTURE

Mexico suffers from a historic pattern of state-sponsored violence. Thousands of people were killed or disappeared during the 1970's internal conflict known as the *Guerra sucia* ('Dirty War'), in which government forces carried out enforced disappearances, systemic torture and extrajudicial executions against those perceived as political opponents. The fate of many who disappeared during the conflict remains unknown.



State-enforced disappearances and executions were common during the Dirty War. Source: Once Noticias Digital

Panellist Tita Radilla of the Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Mexico outlined the difficulties faced by family members in trying to get investigations and sanctions in these cases.

- Back in the 1960s and 1970s, victims and families were prevented from denouncing state-sponsored human rights abuses because of widespread collusion in institutions.
- In 1990, the National Human Rights Commission was created and while some claims were submitted to it, no tangible outcome was achieved.
- In 2001, a Special Prosecutor's Office was established to address past abuses. Ms Radilla reported that 532 claims were submitted.
- In 2006, when the office was closed, it had produced limited results. The cases were passed on to the General Coordination of Investigations (CGI) department of the Prosecution Office in charge of federal crimes.

- Twenty-two years after the beginning of investigations, family members still haven't received substantial information from authorities and resources for the investigations have been cut. This raises the question of the political willingness of the Mexican state to address historical human rights abuses and violations, and its capacity of doing so while also facing many present problems.
- In October 2020, a decree was issued that established a Truth Commission to collect information, document and address impunity on past human rights cases that occurred between 1965 and 1990, and provide recommendations to international bodies.
- In May 2023, the National Forensic Data Bank within the General Prosecutor's Office became operational. This is an interconnected digital database for the search and identification of missing persons.

Ms Radilla highlighted four recommendations for effective progress to be achieved on the open cases:

1. enhance the mandate of the Truth Commission to allow it to carry out thorough investigations into violations and searches for the disappeared, with a victim-centric approach;
2. re-establish a special prosecution office to offer case continuity so that it can act in coordination with the Truth Commission;
3. individual sanctions for all those already found responsible for serious human rights violations;
4. adopt procedures that avoid, by all means, re-victimisation; and
5. offer reparations to victims in line with international standards.



Starting from (L): Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez; Carolina Villadiego Burbano; Tita Radilla; Santiago Aguirre.

Panellist Santiago Aguirre, Director of the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, detailed how the documented pattern of political dissidents and their family members being targeted by state-affiliated actors is a recurring one in Mexico's history. 'Without having solved that history', said Mr Aguirre, 'in 2006 we entered a new stage of disappearances'.

Recent decades have indeed seen Mexico grappling with an increase in criminality, in no small part due to its central positioning in the trafficking of narcotics between Latin America and the United States.

According to a report by the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances,<sup>16</sup> over 100,000 persons had been registered as disappeared in Mexico, a figure which grew by 98 per cent between 2006 and 2021. This data underscores the close correlation between mounting organised crime and the increase in disappearances. The UN Committee noted an alarming pattern that 'acts of enforced disappearance continue to be committed directly by public officials at the federal, state and municipal levels. In addition, persons involved in organized crime, with various forms of collusion and varying degrees of participation, acquiescence or omission by public officials, have become some of the main perpetrators of disappearances.'

---

**“** Acts of enforced disappearance continue to be committed directly by public officials at the federal, state and municipal levels. In addition, persons involved in organized crime, with various forms of collusion and varying degrees of participation, acquiescence or omission by public officials, have become some of the main perpetrators of disappearances

*UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances*

---

<sup>16</sup> Committee on Enforced Disappearances, 'Report of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances on its visit to Mexico under article 33 of the Convention', 18 May 2022, CED/C/MEX/VR/1 (Findings) accessed 5 February 2024.



# ATTACKS AGAINST THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY

In 2018, presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, campaigning heavily on an anti-crime and anti-corruption platform, secured 53 per cent of the popular vote – the first candidate to win an outright majority since 1988. Bolstered by a strong mandate, the executive branch has pushed against the constitutional limits to its authority: 809 constitutional controversies have been debated during President Obrador’s administration as of July 2023, almost double that of his predecessor.<sup>17</sup> Of the 809 debates, 572 have resulted in rulings of unconstitutionality.

In response to this judicial pushback, the executive has interfered with judicial independence, through egregious and repeated remarks undermining the integrity of the country’s Supreme Court. President Manuel Lopez Obrador has accused the Mexican federal judiciary of being ‘completely distorted’ and ‘impacted by corruption’. He has also compared senior judges to ‘gangsters’ and claimed that the Supreme Court is part of the ‘mafia of power’. Judges who refuse to convict defendants on the basis of insufficient evidence or violations of due process are accused of being corrupt and on the side of criminals. Attacks on members of the judiciary have become a regular feature of the President’s daily press conference, with rhetoric escalating to accusations that judges are staging a ‘technical coup d’etat’ against the executive branch.<sup>18</sup> Those injurious statements against the Supreme Court have the result of eroding public confidence in the judiciary, are an affront to the Rule of Law and undermine Mexico’s democracy.

As Dr Salazar noted, ‘the system is not perfect, which makes it difficult to defend’. With rising violence and the perceived impunity enjoyed by criminals and corrupt officials, politicians who advocate a populist, ‘tough on crime’ platform have surged in the polls. This has resulted in such politicians pressuring police, prosecutors and judges to increase conviction rates, often at the cost of due process. Investigatory forces are encouraged to manufacture evidence and judges are persuaded to coordinate with prosecutors rather than act impartially. Panellist Victorio Gálvez Pérez of the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center provided the example of a judge issuing arrest warrants before they were even requested by prosecutors. Judges who insist on due process are often themselves accused of obstructing justice or taking bribes.

---

17 Carmen Morán Breña, ‘Clashes between President López Obrador and Supreme Court bog down Mexican politics’ *El País* (Madrid, 1 July 2023) <https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-07-01/clashes-between-president-lopez-obrador-and-supreme-court-bog-down-mexican-politics.html#> accessed 5 February 2024.

18 Mark Lorenzana, ‘López Obrador accuses judiciary of coup against executive’ *Pulse News Mexico* (Mexico City, 31 May 2023) <https://pulsenewsmexico.com/2023/05/31/amlo-accuses-judiciary-of-coup-against-executive> accessed 5 February 2024.



## CASE STUDY – Judge Angelica Sanchez Hernández

Panellist Laurence Pantin of México Evalúa detailed the case of Judge Angelica Sanchez Hernández as an example of the attacks against the independence and integrity of Mexico’s judiciary outlined above.

Judge Sanchez, who operates as a judge within the state of Veracruz, issued an order (*amparo*) requiring the court to reopen proceedings to consider evidence that was initially omitted in the case of an alleged perpetrator of homicide. The Governor of Veracruz then accused Judge Sanchez, without evidence, of conspiring to help the defendant and receiving bribes; several days later, the 57-year-old judge was arrested while driving in her vehicle, allegedly for transporting narcotics and firing a weapon at police officers. Initially, the Veracruz Prosecutor’s Office said there was insufficient cause to justify preventative detention and released Judge Sanchez. Upon her release, Judge Sanchez claimed that police planted narcotics in her vehicle and forced her to fire the weapon. Ten days later, she was again arrested,<sup>19</sup> accused of crimes against public faith and ‘influence peddling’ and placed in preventative detention.<sup>20</sup>

The case of Judge Sanchez highlights the intense pressure being placed on judges to make the ‘right’ call when handling criminal cases. Ms Pantin noted the chilling effect of such cases on other members of the judiciary, with Judge Sanchez serving as an example of what happens to render judgments at odds with political objectives.

In total, Ms Pantin identified seven sources of undue pressure on the Mexican judiciary:

1. Executive pressure: Judges are facing increased pressure to reach verdicts that bolster the executive’s political objectives.
2. Populist rhetoric: Members of the executive branch from state governors to the President have harnessed dissatisfaction with the system to rally large crowds

against the judiciary.<sup>21</sup> These protests often include violent imagery, such as prop coffins bearing the photos and initials of Supreme Court judges. Judges have been threatened with violence by members of the public. Judges are accused of corruption when their adherence to due process standards and the presumption of innocence leads to acquittals, as they are seen to be ‘freeing criminals’.

3. Lack of judicial autonomy: Inherent in the right of appeal is the understanding that first-instance judgments might be flawed. However, scrutiny of a verdict must be contained within the judiciary itself. Executive meddling erodes judicial independence and further degrades faith in the process.
4. Cronyism and favouritism: The selection process for judges is opaque and subject to political influence. This has led to a perception of corruption and bias within the judiciary.
5. Judicial incompetence: As a result of the selection process, not all judges possess the competence necessary to effectively carry out their role. The negligence of incompetent judges can cause major procedural errors and miscarriages of justice.
6. Manufactured evidence: The perception that due process is a hindrance to justice has led to authorities manufacturing evidence in order to bolster the probability of a guilty verdict, a trend that further delegitimises the judicial process.
7. Prosecutorial incompetence: Procedural errors, manufactured evidence and human rights violations made during an investigation might force a judge to dismiss a case. This often results in judges being accused of corruption themselves, an accusation that ignores the procedural incompetence that led to such a verdict.

19 Almudena Barragán. ‘Detenida en Ciudad de México la jueza de Veracruz Angélica Sánchez Hernández’ *El País* (Madrid, 16 June 2023) <https://elpais.com/mexico/2023-06-16/detenida-en-ciudad-de-mexico-la-jueza-de-veracruz-angelica-sanchez-hernandez.html> accessed 5 February 2024.

20 Georgina Zerega, ‘Cuitláhuac García defiende la polémica detención de la jueza Sánchez en Veracruz: ‘Se extralimitó e incurrió en delitos’’ *El País* (Madrid, 19 June 2023) <https://elpais.com/mexico/2023-06-19/cuitlahuac-garcia-defiende-la-polemica-detencion-de-la-jueza-sanchez-en-veracruz-se-extralimito-e-incurrio-en-delitos.html> accessed 5 February 2024.

21 Noroeste Nacional, ‘With coffins and the governor of Veracruz in front, morenistas protest at the headquarters of the Court’ (The Mazatlán Weekly, 22 May 2023) [www.mazatlanweekly.com/2023/05/22/with-coffins-and-the-governor-of-veracruz-in-front-morenistas-protest-at-the-headquarters-of-the-court](http://www.mazatlanweekly.com/2023/05/22/with-coffins-and-the-governor-of-veracruz-in-front-morenistas-protest-at-the-headquarters-of-the-court) accessed 5 February 2024.



## Spotlight: the state of Chiapas

Chiapas is Mexico's southernmost state and home to 5.5 million people, of which approximately one million are indigenous. The state acts as a major thoroughfare for the drug trade, and skirmishes between criminal organisations are common, with residents caught in the crossfire. As outlined in the 2023 report '*Chiapas, A Disaster: Between Criminal Violence and the Complicity of the State*', published by the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center, 'the diversity and opacity of armed groups that use violence for social, political, economic and territorial control – marked by the impunity fostered by state actors – contributes to dispossession, exploitation, and social marginalization' throughout the state.<sup>22</sup>



Victorico Galvez Perez

Mr Pérez explained that the criminal justice reforms have not translated to meaningful change within Chiapas; that the reforms 'did not strengthen the scientific investigation capacity of prosecutors'; and that torture remained a 'systemic practice' within the state. Mr Pérez outlined an 11-step practice employed by police and prosecutors to manufacture guilt:

1. Arrest an individual on a misdemeanour or minor felony.
2. During the individual's 48-hour detainment, manufacture evidence and use the evidence to request an arrest warrant for a more serious offence.

<sup>22</sup> Informe Frayba, 'Chiapas, un desastre, Entre la violencia criminal y la complicidad del Estado', *CDH Fray Bartolomé De Las Casas*, March 2023, p 9 <https://frayba.org.mx/informe-frayba-chiapas-un-desastre> accessed 5 February 2024.

3. Secure the warrant; this is often done illegally and with collaboration between judges and prosecutors.
4. Release the individual for the misdemeanour and then rearrest them for the second crime. This second crime is usually serious enough to require longer-term detainment of the individual.
5. Bring formal charges for the second crime; this has been done without notifying the defendant's family or providing them with adequate legal counsel.
6. Keep the defendant in protective custody while the second crime is investigated.
7. Encourage the defendant to plead guilty for a lighter sentence or otherwise waive his/her rights.
8. If the defendant does not plead guilty, drag out the process while keeping the defendant in custody, often for years.
9. Try the defendant; during such trials prosecutors often submit coerced testimonies or tainted evidence that is nonetheless allowed by the judge. The exclusionary rule is not applied by judges.
10. During the trial, the burden of proof has effectively been shifted to the defendant to prove his/her innocence. Conviction is exceedingly likely.
11. The appeal process commences; however, very few verdicts are overturned on appeal. Torture and intimidation are often used to discourage defendants from pursuing this route.

Mr Pérez noted that this process is particularly exploitative of rural workers and low-income urban workers who are unfamiliar with their rights or the flaws in the process. He provided the example of *Carlos Antonio*, who was tortured to such an extent during his initial detention that he was transferred to a hospital and had to attend his trial in a wheelchair. His injuries were such that he was physically unable to speak in his defence at the trial. In May 2023, Mr Perez filed a suit on Mr Antonio's behalf against the Mexican state before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

## The cost of unequal access to justice

### *Criminalising dissent*

Human rights lawyer Robert López Miguel of Colectivo Los Otros Abogados explained how defendants in Mexico have been stripped of many essential characteristics of a fair trial, such as the presumption of innocence and the right to a public trial without delay. Mr López Miguel argued that bypassing these rights is detrimental to the government's strategic objectives of reducing violence and improving popular perception towards the state: if a judge is forced to release a guilty party due to evidence manufactured by the prosecutor, the defendant will walk free; if a judge convicts on the basis of improper evidence, and in the appeal the decision is overturned or the sentence sensibly reduced, perception regarding the already-weak institutional credibility of the Mexican judiciary will only worsen.

Mr López Miguel went on to explain how, rather than improve Mexico's social contract, the populist crackdown has only served to worsen it. Through exemplary sentencing 'social unrest is criminalised and justice is poorly administered'. This fracture between different branches of the Mexican state has been

further exacerbated by the daily broadsides by the government decrying due process in what Mr López Miguel described as ‘media lynchings’.



Starting from (L): Roberto Lopez Miguel; Victorico Galvez; Barbara Spinelli; Valentina Rosendo Cantú; Martha Figueroa Mier.

## *The cost to women*

The consequences of state impunity – particularly within the military – extends to physical and sexual violence against women, as highlighted by panellists Valentina Rosendo Cantú and Martha Figueroa Mier.

Ms Rosendo Cantú is a human rights defender from the indigenous Me’phaa community in the state of Guerrero. She detailed her own experience as a survivor of sexual assault in 2002 by a member of the military and the difficulties she encountered in trying to access justice. She was unable to get appropriate help from the state, whom she believed to be more concerned with defending the military’s reputation than in helping her find justice. In her experience as a victim of sexual assault, Ms Rosendo Cantú was never able to have her case heard in a Mexican court. It is only when she relied, as a last resort, on the IACtHR, that she received justice, after a 21-year fight.<sup>23</sup>

---

23 In 2010, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a sentence against Mexico on Ms Rosendo Cantú’s case so that she could finally obtain justice in her country (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case of Rosendo Cantú et al v Mexico*, Preliminary Objection, Merits, Reparations, and Costs, Judgment of 31 August 2010, Series C No 216). On 1 June 2018, the soldiers Nemesio Sierra García and Armando Pérez Abarca were sentenced to 19 years in prison for having committed rape and torture against Ms Rosendo Cantú. In this emblematic sentence, the Seventh District Judge of the Twenty-first Circuit of the State of Guerrero recognised that the rape suffered by Ms Rosendo Cantú constituted a form of torture, which became more serious due to the victim’s condition as an indigenous and adolescent. The lack of due diligence in the investigation and punishment of the perpetrators by Mexican authorities constituted a violation of the American Convention on Human Rights (World Organisation Against Torture, ‘International Observatory Welcomes the Conviction of Two Soldiers for Sexual Torture’, OMCT, 21 June 2018 [www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/international-observatory-welcomes-the-conviction-of-two-soldiers-for-sexual-torture](http://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/international-observatory-welcomes-the-conviction-of-two-soldiers-for-sexual-torture) accessed 5 February 2024).



Ms Rosendo Cantú highlighted how in enforced disappearances cases, female family members—particularly mothers—are often the ones who seek out news on the fate of the victims, their vanished loved ones, which in turn exposes them to a higher risk of harassment and assault by criminals or officials eager to protect the reputation of their category.

Ms Figueroa Mier is a lawyer and women’s rights defender from the Chiapas region. She highlighted, as a root to impunity, the chronic underfunding of basic judicial services, including basic infrastructure: in her home state of Chiapas, there are 14 courthouses supporting four million people. Backlogs are immense, and investigators lack the training to handle sexual assault cases, further compounding victims’ trauma. When assisting victims with their cases, Ms Figueroa Mier often encountered hostility from officials who would blame women for being assaulted, leading to double victimisation. As women are caught between violent gangs, widespread patriarchal values and underfunded state support systems, femicide became tragically common.



---

**“** The chronic underfunding of basic judicial services is one of the roots to impunity. In Chiapas, there are 14 courthouses supporting 4 million people

*Martha Figueroa Mier, lawyer and women’s rights defender from the Chiapas region*

### *The cost to indigenous peoples*

The indigenous peoples of Mexico are communities who trace their origins to cultures that existed before European colonisation. Mexico’s indigenous population is particularly vulnerable owing to a disproportionately large amount of marginalisation and poverty. Ms Rosendo Cantú, a member of the indigenous Me’phaa community, explained how many communities are culturally isolated, and women filing complaints may lead to rejection from their community.

Ms Rosendo Cantú outlined the additional barriers faced by indigenous peoples in their pursuit of justice. The lack of resources has left public prosecutors understaffed, particularly with regards to translation services. Indigenous peoples are often required to secure their own interpreters at a cost. Ms Rosendo Cantú also described discrimination and hostility as victims must often navigate complex procedural hurdles without outside assistance.

## Case study – Fernández Ortega et al v Mexico, Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Similar to the case of Ms Rosendo Cantú is that of Ms Inés Fernández Ortega, who is also a member of the Me'phaa indigenous community who lived in the state of Guerrero, a state characterised by heavy military presence at the time. In March 2002, Ms Ortega was at home with her four children when 11 uniformed soldiers approached the house. Eight soldiers remained outside, while three entered Ms Ortega's home without her consent or a warrant. The three soldiers pointed their rifles at her and asked her questions about her husband. Ms Ortega, who was unable to speak Spanish, could not answer their questions. One soldier then pushed her to the floor while another raped her. The three soldiers then left the house, and all 11 left the area.

Ms Ortega reported the crime through a translator to the public prosecutor's office. Initially, when she indicated that the perpetrators were soldiers, the agent to whom she reported the crime said that he 'did not have the time to receive the complaint'. However, following an intervention by the Guerrero Human Rights Commission, an agent of the office was willing to take Ms Ortega's statement and send her to a physician for examination and testing. The tests came back with the presence of seminal liquid but were destroyed nonetheless. In later court documents, the state acknowledged 'the destruction of the gynaecological evidence based on the lack of due diligence in its handling'.

---

**“When Ms Ortega, victim of rape, first tried to denounce the crime she suffered, and indicated that the perpetrators were soldiers, the agent to whom she reported the crime said that he did not have the time to receive the complaint”**

What followed was a decade-long attempt by Ms Ortega to find justice. In 2004, she presented a petition to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. During the process, Ms Ortega and her family faced constant harassment, threats and attacks. Soldiers harassed the

family and destroyed their harvest; in February 2007, Ms Ortega's brother Lorenzo Fernández Ortega was found dead with numerous injuries on his body.

In 2006, the Inter-American Commission issued an Admissibility Report, which it approved in 2008. The commission concluded that the state was in violation of its duty to provide a fair trial under Article 8 of the American Convention of Human Rights, its duty to pursue policies to prevent violence against women under Article 7 of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, and its duties under Articles 1, 6 and 8 of the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture.

The commission then asked the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to declare the state responsible for violation of the aforementioned articles. The Organization of Tlapaneco/Me'phaa Indigenous People, the Center for Human Rights of the Tlachinollan Mountain AC (Tlachinollan) and the Center for Justice and International Law ('the representatives') forwarded their briefs, along with pleadings, motions and evidence, concurring with the violations alleged by the commission. The state filed a preliminary objection, and in 2010 the commission and the representatives presented their arguments on the preliminary objection filed by the state. A public hearing was held in April 2010 in Lima, Peru.

The Inter-American Court concluded that state authorities 'did not act with due diligence in the investigation of the rape of Ms Ortega, which, additionally, exceeded a reasonable time'. Consequently, the state did indeed violate Ms Ortega's rights under the American Convention and the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women.

The court held that the state must 'efficiently conduct the criminal investigation into the facts of this case effectively and with due diligence' within a 'reasonable time' in order to 'determine the corresponding criminal responsibilities and apply the punishments and



consequences established by law'. It must also ensure that 'the military system of justice must abstain... from hearing cases of human rights violations attributed to members of the Mexican armed forces'. Victims must have 'full access and capacity to act at all stages', for example, as an indigenous person and a woman, Ms Ortega must be provided with an interpreter and the additional support necessary based on her vulnerable circumstances.

The court ordered the state to 'initiate disciplinary, administrative or criminal actions under its domestic law with regard to those responsible for the different procedural and investigative irregularities in a case'. In 2013, two of Ms Ortega's attackers were arrested. One died in custody. In March 2023, 21 years after Ms Ortega was raped, a judge found the other soldier guilty and sentenced him 20 years in prison.<sup>24</sup>

---

24 Abril Mulato, 'México: indígena torturada hace 21 años gana caso a militar' Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, 8 March 2023) [www.latimes.com/espanol/mexico/articulo/2023-03-19/mexico-indigena-torturada-hace-21-anos-gana-caso-a-militar](https://www.latimes.com/espanol/mexico/articulo/2023-03-19/mexico-indigena-torturada-hace-21-anos-gana-caso-a-militar) accessed 5 February 2024.

## About the award

Ebru Timtik was one of 18 lawyers in Turkey who were members of the Progressive Lawyers Association, some of whom were working at the People's Law Office, made subject to prosecution at the Istanbul 37th Assize Court under Articles 314 and 220 of the Turkish Penal Code for terrorist offences. She and her colleagues were convicted on 20 March 2019 after a trial during which basic procedural safeguards and internationally recognised fair trial principles were ignored. Her conviction was based on the testimony of anonymous witnesses, many of whom gave inconsistent testimony in relation to alleged facts and time periods. Documents allegedly obtained from government authorities in Belgium and the Netherlands were never authenticated, but were nevertheless used as grounds for convictions without her lawyers having access to them. The originals of digital documents that were allegedly seized at a musical centre were also not made available to the defence lawyers. They could not see, analyse or challenge these documents, which were never shown to have existed. Lawyers acting in her defence were frequently prevented from participating in the proceedings and, in some circumstances, were excluded.



The defects in the trial process led Ebru Timtik, together with one of her colleagues, Aytac Ünsal, to commence a death fast, following a hunger strike that began on 5 April 2020, the Turkish 'Day of the Lawyer'. On 27 August 2020, Ebru Timtik passed away while continuing to protest both her innocence of the charges on which she had been convicted and the lack of respect for fundamental fair trial principles in the criminal justice system that had prejudiced both her and her colleagues, and many thousands of other individuals in Turkey.

In recognition of her sacrifice, the annual Ebru Timtik Award was established to honour an individual or organisation that has made an exceptional contribution towards securing fair trial rights in the country in which International Fair Trial Day is focusing for the year in question. The award itself is accompanied by a work of art provided by an artist with ties to human rights causes.

## The 2023 Awards Ceremony

The keynote speaker for the 2023 Ebru Timtik Awards Ceremony, Mr Diego García Sayán, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers and former President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, addressed the importance of acknowledging the sacrifice of those who dedicate their lives to the pursuit of fair trial rights. The award, and the stories of the awardees, should serve as an example for everyone seeking to defend human rights, advance due process and protect the rule of law. Mr García Sayán recalled how he followed Ebru Timtik’s case during his tenure as Special Rapporteur, and how it became a symbol of bravery and courage in the face of repression. Mr García Sayán pointed at the different wounds at institutional level that affect the Rule of Law in Mexico, which are compounded by another external element affecting the criminal justice system, namely organised crime.



From (R): Diego García Sayán; Eleonora Scala; Şerife Ceren Uysal; Iris Rocio Santillan Ramirez.

Şerife Ceren Uysal of the Progressive Lawyers’ Association, colleague of Ebru Timtik at the Istanbul Bar, recalled Ebru Timtik’s personal and professional story and explained the importance of the award as a rallying cry for those fighting for injustice all around the world. The heroism of those who take up the legal profession to defend victims who cannot defend themselves was emphasised: while each country has its own collective memory of pain and trauma, people’s fight, resistance and struggle against oppression are transversal, and shared across continents and cultures. This has been witnessed through stories from Turkey, Egypt and Mexico that were raised in the three IFTD editions.

This year, the Ebru Timtik Award Artwork was provided by Mirta Kupferminc, an international award-winning artist, teacher and curator.<sup>25</sup> Ms Kupferminc was born in Buenos Aires to immigrant parents who had survived the Auschwitz death camps in the Second World War. Her works are exhibited in the US Library of Congress, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and the Fine Arts Taipei Museum of Taiwan, among others. Identity, human rights and memory are themes that run through her work.

<sup>25</sup> Mirta Kupferminc [www.mirtakupferminc.net](http://www.mirtakupferminc.net) accessed 5 February 2024.







Alicia de los Ríos Merino - 2023 Ebru Timtik Award recipient

The second award recipient was feminist lawyer and human rights defender, **Ms Yeli Pérez Garrido** is founder and director of the organisation Justicia Pro Persona, legal adviser to the National Citizen Observatory on Femicide and member of the Latin American Network of Strategic Litigation. She has accompanied and represented women, girls and adolescents who have been victims of disappearance, torture and sexual and family violence as well as attempted femicide and femicide. In her acceptance speech, Ms Yeli Pérez Garrido thanked the many women who helped serve as an inspiration and guiding light for her own career as a human rights lawyer. She emphasised that women have the power to defend others.

---

**“**Over four thousand women are slaughtered in this country. Consider the survivors of femicide; we echo the voices of their fight and resistance against misogynistic violence

*Ms Yeli Pérez Garrido*



Yeli Pérez Garrido – 2023 Ebru Timtik Award recipient

## AGENDA

1000 – 1020	<p><b>Opening Remarks</b></p> <p>Carolina Villadiego Burbano <i>Latin America Team Leader, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)</i>          Arturo Pueblita Fernández <i>President, Ilustre y Nacional Colegio de Abogados de México (INCAM)</i>          Mónica González Contró <i>Director, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas (UNAM)</i></p>
1020 – 1050	<p><b>Moderator</b></p> <p>Cath Kent <i>Programme Lawyer, International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)</i></p> <p><b>Keynote Speeches</b></p> <p>Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño <i>Inter-American Commission of Human Rights</i>          Judge Ricardo Perez Manrique <i>President, Inter-American Court of Human Rights (video message)</i>          Margaret Satterthwaite <i>United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers (video message)</i></p>
1050 – 1150	<p><b>Setting the Scene: Systemic Fair Trial Rights Concerns in Mexico</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b></p> <p>Oscar Cruz Barney <i>President, Mexican National Committee, International Association of Lawyers (UIA)</i></p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <p>José Luis Caballero <i>ICJ Commissioner, Professor at the Iberoamericana University</i>          Pedro Salazar <i>Researcher, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM</i>          Laurence Pantin <i>Program Coordinator for Transparency in Justice and Special Projects, México Evalúa</i></p>
1150 – 1210	<p><b>Coffee Break</b></p>
1210 – 1340	<p><b>From Rights to Justice: Unveiling the Interplay Between Human Rights and Due Process in Mexico</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b></p> <p>Barbara Spinelli <i>Co-president, European Association of Lawyers for Democracy &amp; World Human Rights (ELDH)</i></p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <p>Roberto López Miguel <i>Lawyer, Colectivo Los Otros Abogados</i>          Victorico Gálvez Pérez <i>Lawyer, HRC Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas</i>          Valentina Rosendo Cantú <i>Human Rights Defender, Indigenous Me’phaa community, State of Guerrero</i>          Martha Figueroa Mier <i>Lawyer, Women’s rights defender, Chiapas</i></p>
1340 – 1440	<p><b>Lunch break</b></p>

<p><b>1440 – 1610</b></p>	<p><b>Seeking Accountability: Responses to Enforced Disappearances and Summary Executions</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b>  Carolina Villadiego Burbano <i>Latin America Team Leader, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)</i></p> <p><b>Speakers</b>  Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez <i>Executive Director, Fundación para la Justicia y el Estado Democrático de Derecho</i>  Tita Radilla <i>Vice-president, Association of Relatives of the Detained- Disappeared in Mexico (AFADEM)</i>  Santiago Aguirre <i>Director, Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez (Centro ProDH)</i></p>
<p><b>1610 – 1640</b></p>	<p><b>Coffee Break</b></p>
<p><b>1640 – 1745</b></p>	<p><b>Ebru Timtik Award Ceremony</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b>  Eleonora Scala <i>Programme Coordinator, International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)</i></p> <p><b>Speakers</b>  Diego García Sayán <i>Former UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Former President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights</i>  Şerife Ceren Uysal <i>Co-secretary General of European Association of Lawyers for Democracy &amp; World Human Rights (ELDH), Executive Member of the Progressive Lawyers’ Association (ÇHD)</i>  Mirta Kupferminc <i>Independent multidisciplinary artist</i>  Representative of the Ebru Timtik Award Selection Committee  Awardee(s)</p>
<p><b>1745 – 1800</b></p>	<p><b>Closing</b>  Ayşe Bingöl Demir <i>European Association of Lawyers for Democracy &amp; World Human Rights (ELDH), Director of the Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project</i></p>

## SPEAKER'S BIOS

### **Carolina Villadiego Burbano**

*Latin America Team Leader, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)*

Carolina is a Colombian lawyer from the Universidad de los Andes. He has a Master's Degree in Law (LLM) from the University of George Washington in the United States, and a Master's Degree in Political Science and Sociology from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO). Her professional experience has focused on justice systems and their connection with human rights in Latin America, and on developing advocacy strategies in these fields.

Carolina has participated as a teacher in some universities, especially in topics related to the justice system functioning.

She worked with several institutions, including the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, the Justice Studies Center of the Americas (JSCA) and the Center for Law, Justice and Society Studies (Dejusticia). Currently, she is Legal Counsel for Latin America of the International Commission of Jurists and is currently part of the Board of Director at Dejusticia.

### **Mónica González Contró**

*Director, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas*

Mónica González Contró is an academic and human rights advocate, especially those of children and adolescents. She holds a PhD in Fundamental Rights from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and has been a researcher at the Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México since 2005.

In addition to her academic work, she has held various positions within the University. She has been Academic Secretary of the Institute of Legal Research (2011-2015) and General Counsel of UNAM (2015 to 2020).

She has participated in collegiate bodies of public and private institutions for the defense of human rights. She has been Counselor of the Federal District Human Rights Commission, Member of the Advisory Assembly of the Council to Prevent Discrimination of Mexico City, Counselor of the National Human Rights Commission, Member of the Advisory Council of the Integral System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents and member of the Board of Directors of the Federal Public Defender's Office, among other appointments.

### **Arturo Pueblita Fernández**

*President, Ilustre y Nacional Colegio de Abogados de México INCAM*

Arturo Pueblita Fernández holds a law degree from the Ibero-American University in Mexico City.

He completed a specialization and a master's degree in tax law at the Universidad Panamericana in Mexico City. Since 2003, he has been dedicated to litigation and consulting in tax matters, and in 2011 he founded the law firm Pueblita Abogados.

He has been an Administrative Law and Tax Law professor at the Ibero-American University since 2007. He is also a professor in the postgraduate course in Tax Law at the Universidad Panamericana in Mexico City.

He is President of the Ilustre y Nacional Colegio de Abogados de México INCAM since 2020. At the Mexican Academy of Tax Law, he was president of the National Board of Directors for the period 2017- 2021. In the Latin American Institute of Tax Law, he is a full member of the Board of Directors representing Mexico. He is the Regional Secretary for the Americas of the International Association of Lawyers, a worldwide organization based in France.

### **Cath Kent**

*Programme Lawyer, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)*

Cath Kent is a Programme Lawyer at the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, where she works on human rights in the administration of justice with a focus on torture prevention, enforced disappearances, and the death penalty. She works with legal professionals and human rights defenders worldwide to design and deliver rights-based and gender-sensitive programmes, including capacity building, technical assistance, and advocacy. She is also a member of the UK Lay Observers, who monitor detention in court custody as part of the UK's National Preventive Mechanism, and of the UK Government's Civilian Stabilisation Group, a membership body of individuals who can deploy to fragile and conflict affected states to assist the UK Government in addressing instability. Prior to joining the IBAHRI, Cath worked as a Human Rights Officer for the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. She holds an LLM in International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law from the University of Essex and an LLB (Hons) from the University of Nottingham.



## **Esmeralda Arosemena De Troitiño**

*Inter-American Commission of Human Rights*

Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño was re-elected by the General Assembly of the OAS during its 49th Regular Period of Sessions, on June 28, 2019, for a further four-year term from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2023. In her first term as a commissioner (2016-2019), she served as President of the IACHR during 2019.

She held office in Panama's judiciary: she was a Justice of the Supreme Court, of which she was vice-president; she also presided the Chamber for Criminal Cases, and was a judge on the High Court on children and adolescent affairs. She participated in the Special Commission that proposed constitutional reforms in Panama on 2011, and on the Commission that elaborated the Code of Constitutional Procedures in 2016. She has a degree in Philosophy, Letters and Education, with a specialization in Pedagogy, as well as a degree in Law and Political Science. Her post-graduate studies are in gender, with a specialization in family and childhood, as well as constitutional affairs. She is an academic and a professor at the University of Panama, the Superior Judicial Institute and Panama's Judicial Authority.

She collaborates with the Public Prosecutor's Office School with regards to the new criminal system and in the subject of juvenile criminal justice. She is a consultant on childhood, adolescence, women and family for international organizations. She was also an ad honorem consultant in the elaboration, debates and approval of important legislation on these matters for Panama's legislative authority. She is a citizen of Panama.

## **Juez Ricardo Pérez Manrique**

*President, Inter-American Court of Human Rights*

Ricardo César Pérez Manrique is a Uruguayan lawyer, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights since January 2022. Previously, he had been a judge of the Court itself and a Minister of the Supreme Court of Justice of Uruguay.

He graduated from the Universidad de la República with the degree of Doctor in Law and Social Sciences in 1973; in 1974 he also revalidated his degree at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, practising law in Argentina.

In 1989 he entered the judiciary in Uruguay, where he had a long career. He was appointed Minister of the Supreme Court of Justice of Uruguay on March 28, 2012.

## **Margaret Satterthwaite**

*United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers*

Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite was appointed as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers by the Human Rights Council in October 2022. Professor Satterthwaite is an international human rights scholar and practitioner with decades of experience in the field. She is a Professor of Clinical Law at New York University School of Law, where she directs the Global Justice Clinic and serves as a faculty director of the Robert and Helen Bernstein Institute for Human Rights and the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice.

Her scholarship has focused on access to justice, legal empowerment, and methodological innovation in human rights, among other topics, and she has published several edited volumes and dozens of articles and book chapters. Professor Satterthwaite has worked with individuals and communities seeking to realize their rights around the world, including in Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Uganda, the United States, and Yemen. She has litigated in international and domestic fora, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Professor Satterthwaite graduated magna cum laude from NYU School of Law. She clerked for a US Court of Appeals judge and subsequently for judges of the International Court of Justice. She has worked for a variety of human rights organizations, including Amnesty International USA, where she co-founded and then directed the organization's program to defend the human rights of those persecuted on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. She also worked with Street Law, Human Rights First, and the Haitian Truth and Justice Commission. She has also served as a human rights consultant and advising expert to the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and two UN Special Rapporteurs. She has been a member of the boards of directors of several human rights organizations, including Amnesty International USA, the Global Initiative on Economic and Social Rights, the International Service for Human Rights, and Digital Democracy.

## **Oscar Cruz Barney**

*President, Mexican National Committee, International Association of Lawyers (UIA)*

Graduated with honors from the Universidad Iberoamericana in 1995, Oscar Cruz Barney also holds a Ph.D. in Law from the Universidad Panamericana, which he obtained in 2005. In 2012, his law degree was officially validated as a Spanish degree by the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte de España.

Since 1992, he is a partner of Cruz Abogados (formerly Rodolfo Cruz Miramontes), an activity he couples with his work as a potential arbitrator of the Centro de Arbitraje de México (CAM) and of the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris (ICC), as well as his research work at the Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la UNAM.

Recently accredited as a mediator, arbitrator, negotiator, and ombudsman by the Federation of Integrated Conflict Management - The Mediation and Conciliation Network, Dr. Cruz Barney also serves as a panelist for Chapter XIX of the North American Free Trade Agreement and has participated in the 'Side Room', the private sector delegation for international negotiations of the Mexican government. He currently serves as president of the Mexican National Committee of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA) and is an expert member of the Mexican Delegation to the Organización Internacional de la Viña y el Vino (OIV) in the DROCON groups, Consumer Rights, and Information CIII Economy, and SECUAL Law, Food Safety.

Dr. Cruz Barney was president of the Ilustre y Nacional Colegio de Abogados de México between 2008- 2010 and 2010-2012 and is currently a member of the Ilustre Colegio de Abogados de Madrid. Dr. Cruz Barney was also appointed Vicepresident of the Academia Mexicana de Jurisprudencia y Legislación for the period 2023-2025.

With a solid and internationally recognized academic and professional experience, in addition to his interventions as speaker in several masters and graduate courses in the Universidad Iberoamericana, the Universidad Panamericana, the Escuela Libre de Derecho, the Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la UNAM, and the International Chamber of Commerce Mexico, he is a frequent guest as lecturer and professor in Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Portugal, the United States, Argentina, Chile,

Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico, among other countries. In 2022, Dr. Cruz Barney was appointed Professeur Distingué 'Honorary Professor' of the Faculty of Legal, Political, and Social Sciences of the Université de Lille, France.

Author of a significant number of works on international trade law, arbitration, and the history of law, Dr. Cruz Barney is an advisor and member of numerous editorial and scientific committees of specialized publications. He is also a frequent participant and coordinator of seminars and academic workshops, as well as national and international congresses.

## **José Luis Caballero**

*ICJ Commissioner, Professor at the Iberoamericana University*

José Luis Caballero holds a Law Degree from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Campus Chihuahua; a Master's Degree in Law from UNAM Law School; a Doctorate in Law from UNED of Spain; and a Diploma in Human Rights and Democratization Processes from Universidad de Chile. He is a member of the National System of Researchers.

He is an academic-researcher in the Department of Law at the Ibero-American University of Mexico City, and is currently a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists. His published work consists of more than ninety book chapters and articles in specialized journals on constitutional law, human rights and international human rights law, as well as some books on these subjects.

## **Pedro Salazar**

*Researcher, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM*

Mr. Salazar obtained his Bachelor of Laws degree from the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (1994), with special mention, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Philosophy. He has a lengthy and prolific career as a researcher, academic, consultant, and arbitrator, as well as an extensive background in the publishing and media sectors.

Dr. Salazar Ugarte served as director of the Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la UNAM (IIJ-UNAM) during the periods 2014-2018 and 2018-2022. He also acted as Academic Secretary of the same Institute between 2009 and 2011 and headed the Internal Council Secretariat, the Editorial Committee Secretariat, and the Editorial Subcommittee of the Institution. In 2010, he was president of the Academic Commission for the Evaluation of Institutional Research Line Projects at the IIJ-UNAM. Since 2012, Dr. Salazar has been a member of the National System of Researchers.

In 2016, Doctor Salazar founded, together with leaders from different sectors, Impunidad Cero, an organization aimed at studying, analyzing, raising awareness, and countering impunity in Mexico. In that same year, he joined the Assembly of Partners of Fundar, Centro de Análisis e Investigación, aimed at promoting better relations between society and government, and the Council of Advisers of Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad. Also in 2016, he was appointed arbitrator of the Permanent Court of Arbitration based in The Hague.

As a professor, Doctor Salazar has focused on Constitutional Law, Political Theory, Public Law, Human Rights, Ethics, Democracy, and the Rule of Law, among others. Throughout his career, he has lectured in bachelor's, graduate, master's, doctorate, and specialization degrees, both in Mexico and abroad, in countries such as the United States, Spain, Italy, and Germany. He has also been invited as a lecturer and speaker at numerous national and international seminars and congresses.

Author, co-author, editor, translator, and coordinator of several academic works, Dr. Salazar also collaborates with several specialized magazines, newspapers, and print media in Mexico and other countries. His most recent books include *Power over Law. The Case of the Popular Consultation to Judge Former Presidents*, as well as *Democracy and (Culture of) Legality*, in its second edition.

He is also a commentator and host on radio and television, on channels such as Canal 11, Canal Judicial, Canal del Congreso, Canal 40, and UNAM TV. For his work in the series *Electoral Observatory*, he won the Honorable Mention of the 2018 Edition in the category Radio and Television, Premio Alemán de Periodismo Walter Reuter.

Currently, he is a Secretary of the Academia Mexicana de Ciencias.

## **Laurence Pantin**

*Program Coordinator for Transparency in Justice and Special Projects, México Evalúa*

Laurence Pantin holds a PhD in Political Science from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO – Mexico), a Master's Degree in Journalism from New York University (NYU), and a Bachelor's Degree in Communication from the Institute of Political Studies of Paris (Sciences Po Paris). Her research interests are judicial independence, judicial governance, judicial career, transparency and combating corruption in the judiciary, state judiciaries and digital justice.

## **Barbara Spinelli**

*Co-president, European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH)*

Barbara Spinelli is Co-President of ELDH and a human rights lawyer, banned from Turkey for her activities as international observer. Co-president of the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights. Member of the Bologna Bar Council' Human Rights Committee and of the Commission for Relations in Mediterranean Area of the Italian Bar Council (CNF). Femicide expert for UN. Awards: SEN Prize for standing out in defense of women's right, CNF medal of merit for her activities as international observer.

## **Roberto López Miguel**

*Lawyer, Colectivo Los Otros Abogados*

Roberto López Miguel is a graduate of the Law School of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM); he completed postgraduate studies at the Facultad de Estudios Superiores Aragón of the UNAM, where he completed a Specialization in Criminal Law and a Master's Degree in Criminal Policy.

Since 2006, he has been a member of the Zapatista Lawyers Collective, joining the legal defense of political prisoners who have been detained in contexts of social repression by the Mexican State, as was the case of the political prisoners of Texcoco and San Salvador Atenco, in the State of Mexico; of UNAM student Luis Fernando Sotelo Zambrano, accused of burning the Ciudad Universitaria Metrobus station in 2014, in the context of the Third Global Day of Action for the appearance alive of the Ayotzinapa students; as well as the students of the UNAM, ENAH (National School of Anthropology and History), IPN (National Polytechnic Institute) and UAM (Autonomous Metropolitan University) arrested on November 20, 2014, who were protesting in the vicinity of the International Airport of Mexico City, in the same context of the disappearance of the 43 normalistas.

Since 2015, he has been part of the Colectivo Los Otros Abogados, which currently carries the legal defense of the politically persecuted Miguel Ángel Peralta Betanzos, an Indigenous Mazateco from the Community of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca, sentenced to 50 years in prison for defending the autonomy and self-determination of his people, and for opposing the political-economic interests of a cacique family linked to the MORENA party, and the government of the State of Oaxaca.

They also carry the legal representation of the Yaqui Indigenous Fidencio Aldama Pérez, imprisoned since 2016 in the prison of Ciudad Obregón Sonora, sentenced to 14 years in prison, for defending his territory and for opposing the construction of the Sonora Gas Pipeline, owned by the transnational company Sempra Energy.

## **Victorico Gálvez Pérez**

*Lawyer, HRC Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas*

Community Human Rights Defender. Law degree from the Autonomous University of Chiapas. For the past 5 years, he has been a lawyer at the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas A.C. Human Rights Center in the State of Chiapas, where he documents, accompanies and litigates national and international cases of serious human rights violations of persons arbitrarily deprived of their liberty, torture and ill-treatment, disappearances, arbitrary deprivation of life, forced displacement, as well as repression against human rights defenders, journalists and press, and land and territorial violations, particularly of indigenous peoples. Finally, she is a member of the Network of Democratic Defenders of Mexico (REDD).

## **Valentina Rosendo Cantú**

*Human Rights Defender, Indigenous Me'phaa community, State of Guerrero*

Valentina Rosendo Cantú is an indigenous woman belonging to the 'Me'phaa' indigenous community in the state of Guerrero. Valentina Rosendo was a victim of sexual violence and torture by the military in 2002 when she was only 17 years old and did not speak Spanish. Since then, she has fought in Mexican and International Courts to obtain justice and reparations, with the support of civil society organizations. Her case is considered a reference against sexual torture and militarization.

In 2010, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a judgment against the Mexican State as responsible for serious violations of Valentina's human rights, committed in a context marked by poverty, discrimination and 'military institutional violence.' In 2018, her case was the first of its kind to be tried in the ordinary civilian jurisdiction following a judgment of the IACHR Court, setting a precedent for justice to be obtained in other similar cases. It is still at the stage of Supervision of Compliance with the Judgment at the IACHR Court.

## **Martha Figueroa Mier**

*Lawyer, Women's rights defender, Chiapas*

Martha Figueroa Mier is born in Mexico City and Chiapanenca by choice. She is a lawyer graduated from the Faculty of Law of the UNAM, with specialization and experience in human rights, women's rights, gender violence, sexual and reproductive rights, protocols for judging and investigating with a gender lens, to obtain protection orders and application of NOM 046. An activist with extensive training and experience in promotion, defence, training and dissemination of human rights.

Founder of the following organizations: Mujeres Libres COLEM, AC. Grupo de Mujeres de San Cristóbal Las Casas, AC (1989). Recognized and awarded in Chiapas by networks and organizations and public institutions, but personally the greatest award is the one expressed by the families of the women for whom she works and the recognition by young and contemporary feminists as a 'Maestra'.

## **Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez**

*Executive Director, Fundación para la Justicia y el Estado Democrático de Derecho*

Member of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances since May 1, 2023 and executive director and founding partner of the Fundación para la Justicia since 2011. Through the Fundación para la Justicia she has promoted, together with other non-governmental organizations, projects related to access to justice and truth for migrants, such as the Forensic Commission for the Identification of the remains of the 3 massacres of migrants that occurred in the north of Mexico, the External Support Mechanism for the Search and Access to Justice for Migrants and the Roundtable for the Search of Migrants in Mexico.

With other civil society organizations, she has also promoted several actions to influence structural changes in the search and identification of remains, transformation of prosecutors' offices (within the movement Fiscalía que Sirva), strengthening of the Judiciary and citizen security policies. Before working for the Fundación para la Justicia, she was involved in various governmental and non-governmental spaces on issues of access to justice, human rights, women's rights, among others.

## **Tita Radilla**

*Vice-president, Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Mexico (AFADEM)*

Daughter of Rosendo Radilla Pacheco and Victoria Martínez Neri. In 1992, the Mexican Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations (Mexico) (AFADEM) was formed, of which she was named President and, from that time to the present, she has dedicated herself to working as a full-time volunteer at AFADEM.

In 2001 she accompanied family members to file complaints with the Special Prosecutor's Office for Social and Political Movements of the Past, in more than 300 cases. In 2001, she took her father's case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and in 2009 she obtained a sentence from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in which the Mexican State was condemned for the forced disappearance of Rosendo Radilla Pacheco.

She has been awarded several prizes for her tireless work in the search for justice for the grave human rights violations committed in the country. She is currently participating in the work of the Historical Clarification Mechanism of the recently created Truth Commission.

## **Santiago Aguirre**

*Director, Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez (Centro ProDH)*

Santiago Aguirre Espinosa holds a Bachelor's Degree in Law and a Bachelor's Degree in Humanistic Studies from the University of Monterrey. He holds a Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democracy from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and a Diploma in Strategic Political Analysis from the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE).

He has worked for the past 15 years in civil human rights organizations, such as: Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos (CADHAC), in Nuevo León; the Human Rights Center of La Montaña 'Tlachinollan', in Guerrero; and the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Centro Prodh), based in Mexico City. Since 2019, he has been the Director of Centro Prodh.

Centro Prodh is a civil organization founded by Jesuits in 1988 to defend and promote human rights in Mexico. For its work, it has received several awards in Mexico and abroad. Its team works on some of the most emblematic human rights causes in the country: Atenco, Guarderia ABC, Tlatlaya, Ayotzinapa, among others.

## **Eleonora Scala**

*Programme Coordinator, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)*

Eleonora Scala is an Italian human rights lawyer. She holds an Integrated Masters in Law (MA) from Bocconi University with specialization in European and criminal law, and an LLM in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex. She is Programme Coordinator at the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) where she focuses on projects related to the rule of law, the independence of judges and lawyers, and gender equality.

She has previously worked as an associate lawyer for the Milan office of the law firm Gianni & Origoni and has had professional experiences in the UN system both in New York, following the work of the 6th Committee of the General Assembly on behalf of the Permanent Mission of Italy, and in Vienna, dealing with migrant smuggling and human trafficking at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). She has also cooperated with the UK Charity Picture People by supporting projects related to empowering vulnerable communities through the use of visual media and technology.

## **Diego García Sayán**

*Former UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Former President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights*

Mr. Diego García-Sayán was appointed as Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers in December 2016. Mr. García-Sayán was a judge of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for two consecutive terms. During his tenure, he was elected Vice-President of the Court (2008-2009) and President of the Court for two consecutive terms (2009-2013).

Mr. García-Sayán has broad experience working for multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Previous responsibilities include: representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Peace Agreements at El Salvador and for the subsequent verification of the agreements, reporting directly to the Security Council; member and Chairperson of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; member of the Redesign Panel on the United Nations System of Administration of Justice, appointed by the UN Secretary-General in 2006; Head of the Electoral Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Guatemala during the general elections (2007).

Mr. García-Sayán was Minister of Justice during the democratic transition in Peru and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was also President of the High Level Commission to design and implement the Museum of Memory, Tolerance and Social Inclusion in Peru, inaugurated in December 2015.

Mr. García-Sayán is the author of several books on international law and development.

## **Mirta Kupferminc**

*Independent multidisciplinary artist*

Mirta Kupferminc is an international award-winning artist, teacher and curator; born in Buenos Aires to immigrant parents who had survived Auschwitz. Identity, human rights and memory, are the themes that run through her work. Since 1977, she has had over 100 solo international exhibitions. Her works are in (selection): Special collections Golda Meir Library in Milwaukee; Library of Congress, Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; The Fine Arts Taipei Museum, Taiwan; and main museums in her country. In 2015 launched LABA-BA: Laboratory of Art and Jewish Culture in Buenos Aires as part of LABA global. To know more: [www.mirtakupferminc.net](http://www.mirtakupferminc.net)

## **Şerife Ceren Uysal**

*Co-secretary General of European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH), Executive Member of the Progressive Lawyers' Association (ÇHD)*

Şerife Ceren Uysal is a human rights lawyer from Istanbul. She is based in Vienna since 2016 August. An executive board member of the Progressive Lawyers Association since 2015, Ceren Uysal was awarded the Dr.Georg Lebiszczak Prize for Freedom of Speech in Austria in 2016 December.

She is researching at the Gender Studies Master Program of the University of Vienna, focusing on gender issues within the context of human rights law, and is currently the co-secretary general of The European Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH). Ceren is working as PEN Norway's Legal Adviser on Turkey.

## **Ayşe Bingöl Demir**

*European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH), Director of the Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project*

Ayşe Bingöl Demir is a human rights lawyer, founding director of Middlesex University-based Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project (TLSP), and member of the European Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH). Her focus areas include strategic human rights litigation before local courts in Turkey as well as international and regional oversight mechanisms, the judgment implementation process of the European Court of Human Rights, and research and advocacy on the systemic human rights and rule of law issues in Turkey and globally, including political persecutions, counter-terrorism laws, and judicial independence.

She acts as external human rights institutions and compliance expert at the United Nations Development Programme, Rule of Law Division. Her past positions include as visiting research fellow at Middlesex University School of Law and member of the Media Defence legal team. Ayşe is a graduate of Istanbul University Law School and Queen Mary University of London. She is the recipient of the 2016 CCBE Human Rights Award alongside three lawyers from Turkey.



## **Alejandra Manavella**

*Advocacy Coordinator CEJIL Mesoamerica*

Alejandra Manavella is a Costa Rican lawyer, specialist in critical criminology and sociology of law from the University of Barcelona, with more than 15 years of experience working in the defense and protection of human rights.

Since 2018, she has been the advocacy coordinator for the Mesoamerica program of the Center for Justice and International Law CEJIL.

CEJIL is an organization of human rights defenders working to reduce inequality, discrimination, and violence. Every day, our litigation, advocacy, and communication strategies contribute to strengthening democracies, protecting and promoting rights, and fighting impunity in the Latin American region. CEJIL's mission is to contribute to the full enjoyment of human rights in the Americas through the effective use of Inter-American System tools and other international human rights law protection mechanisms. (<https://cejil.org/>)

## **Arturo Fournier Facio**

Dr. Arturo Fournier Facio studied law at the University of Costa Rica. He completed his doctorate in law at the Universidad Centroamericana (U.C.A.) Nicaragua. He also completed a doctorate in agricultural law in Florence.

From 2016 to 2018, Mr. Fournier Facio was ambassador plenipotentiary of Costa Rica to the Russian Federation, and in 2022 he was elected Costa Rica's representative to the board of directors of the American Association of Jurists. In 2023, he was appointed member of the Scientific Committee of the Monique & Roland Weyl People's Academy of International Law.

He has given numerous lectures and conferences on different branches of law in Costa Rica, United States, Cuba, Chile, England, Italy, France, Panama, Nicaragua, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, Federal Republic of Germany, Ecuador, Vietnam and Russia. He has participated in 97 international congresses and seminars, in 4 continents, since his graduation in 1974.

## **Evgenia Kouniaki**

Evgenia Kouniaki is a lawyer in Greece. She graduated from the Faculty of Law of the National Kapodistrian University of Athens. She also holds a degree in Social Anthropology and a Master's degree from the Postgraduate Programme in Social and Cultural Anthropology. As a lawyer she has represented victims of police, racist and extreme right-wing violence. She is a member of the team of civil litigation lawyers representing Egyptian fishermen in their own case against the far-right organisation Golden Dawn in Greece. She has worked in non-governmental organisations involved in defending the rights of migrants and refugees and in documenting human rights violations at the Evros border. She is involved in several networks and collectives mainly focused on the defence of human rights

## **Iris Rocío Santillán Ramírez**

*Lawyer and Feminist Criminologist*

Graduate in Law from the UAM, Master in Criminology from the University of Barcelona and PhD in Criminal Law and Criminal Policy from the National Institute of Criminal Sciences. For more than 18 years, she has worked in the field of law enforcement. For the last 22 years, she has been dedicated to teaching and research in the field of violence against women. She has lectured in various forums in Mexico and abroad and has published articles in publishing houses in Spain, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico

She is the author of the books: 'Violación y culpa', 'Matar para vivir', 'Análisis jurídico penal y criminológico con perspectiva de género de casos de mujeres homicidas' and is co-coordinator of the book 'Feminicidios y Violencia feminicida' published by Tirant lo blanch. In 2015, she received the Omecihuatl Medal for her contributions to human rights. She was part of the working group for the activation of the first gender violence alert in Mexico City. She is currently a full professor-researcher 'C' in the Department of Law at the UAM-Azcapotzalco, is a National Researcher and is responsible for the Divisional Seminar on Gender Studies and Violence against Women.



## **Mó Luz (Lucha) Estela Castro Rodríguez**

*Feminist theologian, lawyer and human rights defender*

Luz (Lucha) Estela Castro Rodríguez, a feminist theologian and lawyer, is a Mexican human rights defender who for more than thirty-five years has legally represented victims of human rights violations: femicide, trafficking, torture, forced disappearance, family and sexual violence, as well as displaced persons and defenders at risk.

Her work focuses on strategic litigation; psychosocial accompaniment and empowerment of victims, to strengthen their capacities in the exercise of their rights before the courts, a pioneer in the exercise of Coadjuvance, in judicial activism and socialisation of law in Mexico.



**International Fair Trial Day**



the global voice of  
the legal profession®

**International Bar Association**

Chancery House,  
53-64 Chancery Lane,  
London WC2A 1QS  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 020 7842 0090  
[www.ibanet.org](http://www.ibanet.org)