DEPT. FOR WHA/MEX DUNCAN, AMEMBASSY MEXICO FOR CCAMPBELL

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: MX, PGOV, PINR, KWNN, PHUM, SNAR, CASC
SUBJECT: JUAREZ MURDERS AND STATE POLICE INDICTMENTS

1. Summary: In what appears to be moves to counter external and internal criticism, the state Attorney General of Chihuahua has indicted state police officials for negligence in investigating the women’s murders. The State also convicted several gang members in various murders, after almost 10 years legal proceedings. End summary.

STATE OFFICIALS
2. On December 30, 2004, Chihuahua State Attorney General Patricia Gonzalez Rodriguez requested arrest warrants against five state officials for abuse of authority. She also requested administrative sanctions against 15 more for negligence and malfeasance with regard to the women’s homicides cases in Ciudad Juarez. Among the 15 public employees being sanctioned are: Manuel Esparza, former spokesman of the State prosecutor’s office for crimes against women; six investigative agents; and seven forensic technicians. Specifically, Patricia Gonzalez is seeking arrest warrants for former Chihuahua State Prosecutors Suly Ponce Prieto and Angela Talavera Lozoya; Cristina Olivas; Jesus Torres; and Jose Luis Armendariz. Jesus Torres and two others (not specified) continue to operate as usual out of the Deputy State Attorney General’s Office in Juarez.
3. The Attorney General’s actions resulted from the reports presented in 2004 by Maria Lopez Urbina, Federal Prosecutor on Women’s Homicides. Those reports named 81 state officials who
were responsible for lost evidence, contaminating crime scenes and negligence in protecting women who had complained of domestic abuse/threats. Chihuahua State Attorney General Patricia Gonzalez said that in using the initial list sent by Lopez Urbina, 39 have been cleared of any wrongdoing.

CONVICTIONS

4. In early 1996, the State Judicial Police arrested 10 members of the gang known as "Los Rebeldes" in a raid on downtown Juarez bars. The State Attorney General publicly accused them of committing eight murders, supposedly on orders from Abdel Latif Sharif (who was being held on women's homicides charges). Allegedly Sharif paid the gang members 1000 pesos (approx. 100 USD) per homicide to create an alibi for him. Several members of the gang were released due to lack of evidence or their status as minors. The remainder were formally charged with five of the murders.

5. On January 6, 2005, the Seventh State Penal Judge, Javier Pineda Arzola, issued sentences ranging from 24 to 40 years to the members of "Los Rebeldes". All of those convicted have filed an appeal.

6. When five bus drivers (known as "Los Toltecas") were detained for murder in 1999, Sharif was again named as the mastermind. These men were originally accused of a dozen murders, again all supposedly at the request and funding (this time for 2,500 USD per head) of Sharif. The drivers were finally charged with four killings. (One of the drivers was also charged in a case in which the victim survived and positively identified her attacker.) The bus drivers all allege that their confessions were obtained under torture. On January 6, 2005, the Sixth State Penal Judge, Victor Talamantes Abe, sentenced the five bus drivers (who have remained incarcerated since 1999) for the murders of four women in Juarez. Their sentences were as follows:

Jesús Manuel Guardado aka: "El Tolteca" - 23 years for the attempted homicide and rape of Brenda Patricia Mendez Vazquez, Irma Angelica Rosales Lozano, Elena Garcia Alvarado and an unidentified woman.
Jose Gaspar Chavez aka: "El Gaspy", Victor Manuel Moreno Rivera AKA: "El Narco" and Agustín Toribio Castillo aka: "El Kiani" - 40 years for the homicide of four women: Brenda Patricia Mendez Vazquez, Irma Angelica Rosales Lozano, Elena Garcia Alvarado and an unidentified woman. (Victor Manuel Moreno was also charged with the homicide of another unidentified woman, but his sentence remained the same: 40 years.)
Bernardo Hernandez aka: "Samber" - Acquitted

7. All of the detainees have filed an appeal.
UNCLASSIFIED

8. SBU Comment: There is speculation that these convictions are convenient and have been timed to relieve pressure from the State government. While some of those convicted may be guilty of the crimes of which they are accused, others were probably convenient suspects and while probably involved in criminal activity, were not necessarily involved in the murders for which they were convicted. The families of women murdered and NGO's remain sceptical of the process and of these recent convictions. End comment.

BLAIR

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