

DECLARATION OF MADELEINE PENMAN

I, Madeleine Penman, declare as follows:

I am over 18 and have personal knowledge of the facts described herein.

I am a Researcher on Mexico for the International Secretariat of Amnesty International. Amnesty International is committed to advancing the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced peoples in the Americas.

Since 2015 I have worked as a Researcher based in Mexico City to investigate human rights violations in several countries in the Americas. I document cases, prepare reports, advise on strategy, and initiate actions by Amnesty International, in relation to the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, displaced people, human rights defenders, torture victims, and prisoners of conscience. I am a specialist in human rights in Central America and Mexico and am fluent in Spanish and English. I have lived in Mexico since 2007.

I earned a Bachelor's of Arts and Bachelor's of Law from Macquarie University in Australia, and am a PhD Candidate in Latin American Studies from the Australian National University.

A significant part of my work has focused on the migration of people fleeing the Northern Triangle region (Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador) of Central America. Together with my colleagues at the Americas Regional Office of Amnesty International, we have published five research reports and briefings about the experiences of people fleeing in the Northern Triangle in search of international protection. Since 2016 Amnesty International has conducted intensive research and campaigning on asylum seekers and refugees in Central America and North America.

This declaration summarizes some of Amnesty International's principal findings in relation to the asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants from Central America, often referred to as the so-called "caravans." The information is based on fact-finding missions by Amnesty International researchers in October and November 2018 in Guatemala, southern Mexico, and Mexico City.

Between October 23 and October 28, 2018, an Amnesty International delegation conducted a fact-finding mission to southern Mexico and Guatemala. I participated in this delegation. Our delegation visited the Mexican towns and cities of Huixtla, Mapastepec, Tapachula, Ciudad Hidalgo and Frontera Talismán, and the towns of Ayutla, Tecún Umán and el Carmen in Guatemala.

On November 6, 2018, an Amnesty International delegation carried out research and interviews at the sports facilities set up by Mexico City authorities to receive members of the caravan.

During its fact-finding missions Amnesty International found that the caravans are made up of people with special protection needs such as children, women, LGBTI people, young people, unaccompanied children, and people with disabilities. In total, Amnesty International spoke to approximately 200 members of the caravans, individually and in focus groups, at different points along the route. Amnesty International researchers collected numerous testimonies of members of the caravans who had recently experienced direct attacks on their lives and were forced to flee Central America. These testimonies were echoed by the corroboration we were constantly carrying out at all times with international organizations including agencies of the United Nations in the field, whose staff told us they were also registering high numbers of people with protection needs.

The departure of thousands of Central Americans from their countries in recent weeks shows that people continue to flee desperately in search of protection. Amnesty International has documented that in Honduras and El Salvador in particular, people are exposed to forced recruitment of children, extortion, death threats and even murder by the *maras*, which are powerful violent criminal groups that exercise territorial control in various parts of these countries. Amnesty International has noted the presence in the caravans of many people who fled direct persecution and recent acts of violence by *maras* in Honduras and El Salvador.

Amnesty International observed the precarious humanitarian situation of the people in the caravans. Most of them have been exposed to the elements, walking during the day under very high temperatures in certain parts of Guatemala and Mexico, or sleeping on the ground itself in public spaces, parks or sidewalks, including families. Multiple cases of dehydration have been reported, including in children in Guatemala and Mexico, as well as other ailments, including burns, colds, conjunctivitis, fainting, and diarrhea related to lack of adequate food. The testimonies also revealed extreme fatigue and acute hunger.

Unlike some previous caravans that have passed through Mexico, according to the information Amnesty International has received, the Mexican government in October and November 2018 has not offered transit passes to the members of this caravan. Amnesty International has received several reports based on interviews with members of the caravan that have said that they are still undecided about whether to remain in Mexico or to seek asylum in the U.S., and they will make their decision once arriving in Tijuana.

Mexico's asylum agency (COMAR) currently has no office based in Tijuana. Amnesty International is unaware of its staff being deployed to this northern border city.

I hereby declare under the penalty of perjury that the above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Penman', written in a cursive style.

Madeleine Penman

Executed this 16th day of November 2018