

Mexico Slow to Grant Access to Soldiers in Missing Students Case



Mexico City, June 30 (EFE-RHC)-- The group of Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, or IACHR, experts investigating the disappearance of 43 education students in southern Mexico last year said Monday that the government was acting slowly in granting access to soldiers from the 27th Battalion based in Iguala.

The five members of the group said at a press conference in Mexico City that they received a response from the government on Sunday that said "the state continues analyzing the source of the request."

The group is concerned because more than three months have passed since the request was made to speak with soldiers assigned to the unit, said Angela Buitrago, a Colombian expert on the panel. The delay "limits efforts" to make progress in the investigation and search for the students, who disappeared on Sept. 26 in Iguala, a city in the southern state of Guerrero, Buitrago said. The students disappeared at the hands of municipal police acting on orders from corrupt local officials on the payroll of drug traffickers.

Relatives of the missing students are calling for a separate investigation of the role played in the case by 27th Battalion soldiers, some of whom had contact with the Ayotzinapa Rural Normal School students.

Iguala municipal police officers fired gunshots at students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Normal School, a nearby teacher-training facility, on the night of Sept. 26, Mexican officials say.

Six people died that night, 25 were wounded and 43 students were detained by police and then handed over to members of the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel on the orders of former Iguala Mayor Jose Luis Abarca.

Three suspects in the case – Patricio Reyes, Jhonatan Osorio and Agustin Garcia – confessed to having killed the students and burned their bodies.

The missing students' relatives do not believe the official version of events and their position has been backed by a number of non-governmental organizations.

The team of experts, who also include Spain's Carlos Beristain, Guatemala's Claudia Paz, Chile's Francisco Cox and Colombia's Alejandro Valencia, was created under an agreement signed by the IACHR, the government and representatives of the missing students' families in late 2014.

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