



Press Release

CSOs alert: prison privatization and “accreditation” will worsen the penitentiary crisis in Mexico

Washington D.C, and Mexico City, August 30, 2016.- Even though private investment in the penitentiary system has been subject to growing international criticism, it has been promoted by the Mexican government as an answer to the prison crisis as revealed in the report, **“Privatization of the Penitentiary System in Mexico,”** published by Documenta A.C., Due Process of Law Foundation, The Instituto de Derechos Humanos Ignacio Ellacuría of the Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla, The Instituto de Justicia Procesal Penal, Madres y Hermanas de la Plaza Luis Pasteur, and México Evalúa.

This report, whose foreword was written by Miguel Sarre, human rights specialist and professor at the ITAM (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México), follows up on the hearing entitled “Rights of people deprived of liberty and the privatization of the Mexican penitentiary system,” held before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights on April 2016.

The privatization model has been questioned by countries such as France and the United Kingdom, where it was proved to cause a decline in the quality of services while increasing insecurity inside the prisons. Moreover, the United States government announced last week that private prisons will be gradually phased out, based on a Justice Department investigation that found that living conditions were worse in private prisons than in public prisons.

The report exposes the situation of the prisons in Mexico, where, despite the various recommendations of national and international institutions for the protection of human rights, the problems of overcrowding and self-government, torture practices, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments persist in both public and private prisons.

Moreover, the report highlights the lack of transparency in the implementation of these types of service contracts in the penitentiary system and signals the risk of replication in the Americas, where many countries face similar severe penitentiary crises. For example, countries like Peru have begun to adopt a legal framework that encourages private investment in the penitentiary system in a manner very similar to the Mexican model. It is worth noting that the accreditation schemes have been equally obscure.

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The report concludes that the serious problems that characterize the penitentiary system in Mexico do not justify the incorporation of a model that is detrimental to the dignity of individuals deprived of liberty and hinders social reintegration. To end these problems, the Government should propose substantive changes and a prison policy that puts respect for human rights at the center of the debate.

The report is available in Spanish via the following link:
<http://www.idhieibero.org/ebook/sistemaPenitenciario/#32>

Contact information:

Maïssa Hubert Chakour

maïssa@documenta.org.mx

+52 (55) 5652 7366