

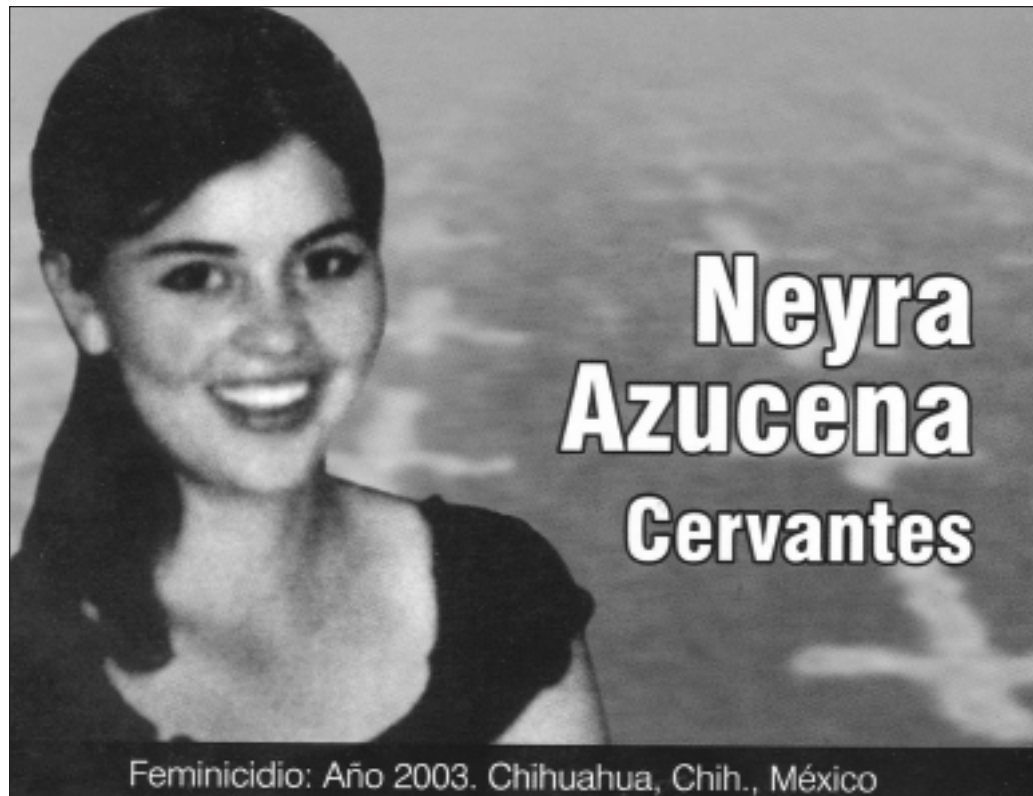
Mexico

In 2006, EAAF continued working on the identification of female remains associated with the investigation of murdered and disappeared women in Ciudad Juárez and the city of Chihuahua.

BACKGROUND

Since early 1993, between 400 and 500 young women disappeared and were found dead in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, a city on the U.S.-Mexico border across from El Paso, Texas, and in the city of Chihuahua, the capital of the state of Chihuahua. Many of the bodies allegedly showed signs of sexual abuse and mutilation.¹ The victims were largely young and poor. Some worked in assembly plants and disappeared after leaving work, others were students or informal commerce employees, victims of domestic violence, or women involved in prostitution, or forced into a combination of forced prostitution and drug trafficking.²

Many of the murders in Ciudad Juárez reportedly remain unsolved. Moreover, the grounds for some high-profile arrests and prosecutions have been contested on the basis of trumped-up charges and confessions



(Above and pages XX and XX) Postcards issued by Justice for our Daughters, a Mexican NGO, as part of an awareness campaign. Neyra Azucena Cervantes, (19), a university student, disappeared on May 13, 2003, in Chihuahua city. EAAF confirmed the identification of her remains, which had been found on July 14, 2003.

under torture.³ Serious problems in all stages of the investigations of these killings have prompted national and international organizations to recommend the involvement of independent forensic experts.⁴

In 1998, a report by the governmental National Commission for Human Rights in Mexico (CNDH) concluded that city and state officials were guilty of neglect and dereliction of duty.⁵ In 2003, the CNDH released another report, including a detailed analysis of the legal and forensic work for more than 200 disappearances and for a similar number of homicides. For most

cases, the CNDH found serious problems in both fields.⁶

Since then, the Mexican government has worked with regional and international institutions to instate reforms to prevent further violence, including increasing public security, strengthening women's legal rights, and conducting public education campaigns.⁷ However, according to the federal institutions and national and international NGOs following these cases, severe deficiencies continue to exist in the system.⁸ On June 3, 2004, two federal officials presented reports stating that the authorities had been

Neyra Azucena Cervantes

19 años

Estudiante Universitaria y empleada; desapareció el martes 13 de mayo de 2003 al salir de la escuela en el centro de la ciudad de Chihuahua; se encontró su cadáver, dos meses después, el 14 de julio. Fue ratificada su identificación por el Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense. **Su Femicidio sigue impune.**

NEYRA:

Mi niña, eres una flor en botón, el 13 de mayo cambié tu vida y la nuestra, desde entonces hay tanta tristeza y dolor en mi corazón que ya no se como vivo, mi corazón de madre me dice que en alguna parte estas viviendo.

Tengo hambre de volver a verte, abrazarte contra me pecho y volver a ver tus ojos claros llenos de luz.

Mi niña, tu Madre ya no es como ayer ¿sabes por qué? Le faltas tú...

Patricia Cervantes



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active in “harassing families and their advocates, as well as torturing and fabricating evidence against scapegoats,” emphasizing that “there was notorious inactivity and negligence...that led to the loss of evidence and the inadequate protection of crime scene.”⁹

In their 2005 report on Mexico, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) stated that there is “ongoing impunity of those responsible, threats directed towards those calling for justice for women, [and] growing frustration on the account of the authorities’ lack of due diligence in investigating and prosecuting crimes in the appropriate manner.”¹⁰ A United

States Congress resolution of May 2006 urged Mexican officials to end the impunity and conduct thorough and fair investigations. On a visit to Mexico in April 2007, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed concern about the rate of femicides throughout the country,¹¹ and in October of the same year, the European Parliament called on Mexico to update its legal code to the standard of its international commitments, to eliminate gender violence, and to reform its judicial system.¹²

EAAF Participation

EAAF’s work focuses on a fraction of the total cases: those of the unidentified female remains and those where

families of victims expressed doubts about the identity and/or cause of death of the remains they received and requested an examination by EAAF.

In December 2003, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), a U.S.-based NGO, contacted EAAF on behalf of the nongovernmental Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights about providing forensic assistance on the Juárez cases. *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas* (Justice for Our Daughters), an NGO from the state of Chihuahua composed of relatives of victims and activists that represent them, and the federal Special Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women in Ciudad Juárez, headed at the time by Guadalupe Morfín, later joined the project.

In June 2004, EAAF traveled to Ciudad Juárez on an assessment trip. Commissioner Guadalupe Morfín reached an agreement with the former attorney general of Chihuahua to allow EAAF to study 20 case files of unidentified female remains and three case files from families who expressed doubts about the identity of the returned remains. EAAF also met with local NGOs working on the disappearances and murders, as well as with families of victims and members of local forensic services.

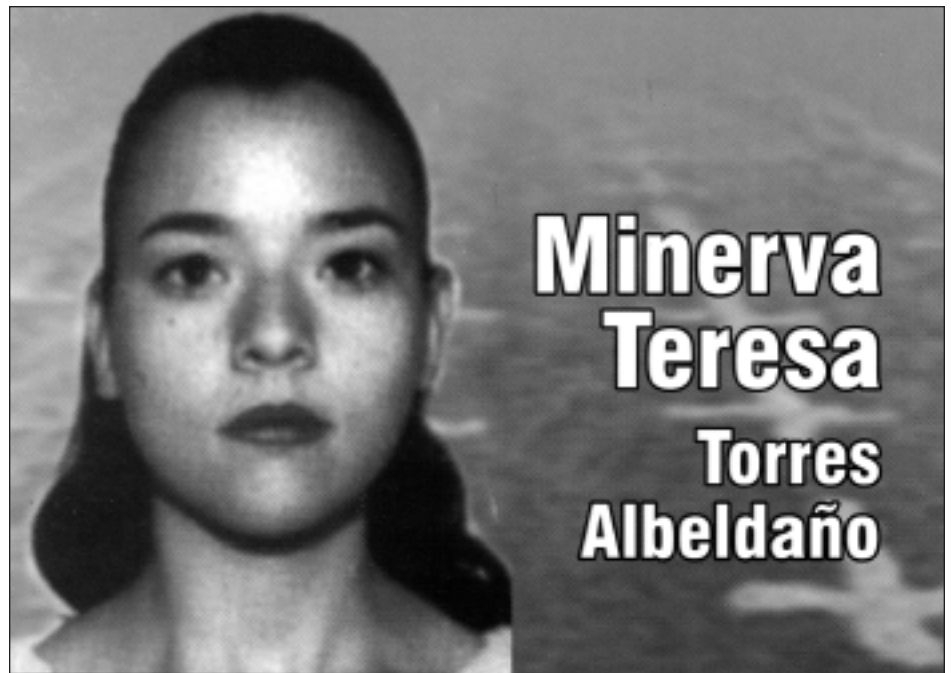
EAAF’s assessment confirmed grave methodological and diagnostic irregularities in all phases of the forensic work on the unidentified remains, including recovery and analysis, and technical

and/or credibility problems with the results of the genetic analyses.¹³

In July 2005, through a contract with the attorney general of Chihuahua, Patricia González, EAAF gained access to most of the unidentified female remains found since 1993 and stored in the Forensic Services (SEMEFO) of Ciudad Juárez and the city of Chihuahua, as well as to sections of their judicial files. Access to full files was in many cases initially resisted by officials in Ciudad Juárez, even though it was part of the above-mentioned contract. EAAF was also authorized to exhume the remains of unidentified females buried in mass graves in municipal cemeteries in Ciudad Juárez. In addition, families doubting the identity of the remains they had received could request EAAF to reexamine their cases.

During 2006, EAAF continued implementing a plan to maximize the recovery and identification of remains and attempted to remedy methodological and scientific errors of past investigations. Crucial to EAAF's strategy is to centralize all the available information on each case, and to analyze each case both individually and collectively to detect systematic patterns. EAAF gathers data from morgue and cemetery records, funeral homes, judicial files, and victims' families.

For each case, EAAF performed a thorough forensic audit, which included comparing the results of its own laboratory analysis with all previous forensic reports. Unlike other situations where EAAF has worked, many of the remains



Feminicidio: Año 2001. Chihuahua, Chih., México

Minerva Teresa Torres Albeldaño

18 años

Soltera; trabajadora de maquila/desempleada; desapareció el martes 13 de marzo de 2001, salió de su casa en la Cd. de Chihuahua rumbo al centro a una entrevista de trabajo; se encontraron sus restos en julio de 2003, la autoridad los escondió dos años, se entregaron a la familia en junio de 2005, su identificación fue ratificada por el Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense. **Su Feminicidio sigue impune.**

HIJAMIA:

Por fin te encontramos, se acabó la esperanza de encontrarte con vida, pero también se acabó la incertidumbre.

Estamos en paz porque sabemos que donde estas, tu espíritu continúa viviendo, fuiste honrada, obediente con tus padres, es por eso que tengo la certeza que estas en un estado de felicidad y paz donde descansas de todas tus aflicciones y de toda pena, donde algún día nos reuniremos contigo.

Tu madre que te ama y te extrañará siempre

Martina Albeldaño



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Minerva Teresa Torres Albeldaño, (18), disappeared on May 13, 2001, in Chihuahua city on her way to a job interview at a *maquiladora* (assembly plant). EAAF identified her remains, found by officials in 2003, but only returned to her family in June 2005.

from Juárez have had previous anthropological, pathological, odontological, and/or genetic studies conducted on them. In some cases, the reports produced by official expert witnesses from one discipline contained results that contradicted the reports produced by official expert witnesses from another discipline working on the same case. Also, in some cases, multiple genetic tests conducted on a specific set of remains produced different results—indicating both exclusion from and inclusion to a biological relationship with a given family, thereby contradicting each other. The confusion resulting from these conflicting forensic reports created a lack of trust between families of victims and forensic officials. This can adversely affect the ability to conduct a forensic investigation. Thus, it became clear to EAAF as work started that, in order to provide credible answers to families of victims and officials, simply adding results to the existing ones would be insufficient. The team also needed to review the previous forensic reports for each case, in order to explain why there had been different results and what errors had been made. Adding an audit of previous forensic work to each case can be time-consuming, but EAAF believes it is the only way to resolve the confusion and mistrust surrounding these cases. These forensic audits are also necessary for the team to be able to properly review the forensic system and make recommendations for future work.

To organize the findings from the audit of the past studies, and for its own findings, EAAF is building a database



Gloria Irene Tarango Ronquillo

Feminicidio: Año 2004. Chihuahua, Chih., México

Gloria Irene Tarango Ronquillo 27 años

Desapareció el 12 de julio de 2004. Sus restos fueron encontrados en agosto del 2004 e identificados por el Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense en febrero del 2006. Su **Feminicidio sigue impune.**

Hija Mía:
¡Qué dolor, que tristeza se apoderó de mi cuando se cumplieron 3 días y ya no regresaste! desde ese momento fue un caminar intenso, te busqué por toda la ciudad y nadie me dió razón. Yo presentía que algo muy grave te había sucedido porque tu nunca te habías separado de tu familia sin haber comunicación. ¡Cómo te extrañamos todo este tiempo! tu abuelita que eras su reina, tus hermanas y tus dos hijos, pero a pesar de todo yo siempre tuve la fe y esperanza puesta en Dios que te iba a encontrar, busque todos los medios hasta que encontré a Justicia para Nuestras Hijas y por ellas al Equipo Argentino, gracias a mi Dios padre todo poderoso y a ellas, unidas te encontramos mi querida Yoya.

Con cariño tu mamá que te ama y te seguirá amando toda la eternidad.
Angelina Tarango R.

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Gloria Irene Tarango Ronquillo, (27), disappeared on July 12, 2004. Her remains were found a month later and positively identified by EAAF in February 2006.

containing ante-mortem, post-mortem, and genetic results.

EAAF originally coordinated the investigation from the Prosecutor's Office for the Investigation of Homicides of Women in Ciudad Juárez (*Fiscalía Especial para la investigación de homicidios de Mujeres en Ciudad Juárez*), which is responsible to the State Prosecutor's Office. As of the writing of this report, EAAF is also coordinating its work with the Missing Women's Unit of Ciudad Juárez.

For the Juárez project, EAAF relied on a multidisciplinary team of advisors and consultants, ranging from forensic anthropology and pathology to law and sociology. During 2006, EAAF anthropologists Mercedes Doretti and Sofía Egaña spent eight months in Ciudad Juárez; EAAF consultant anthropologist Mercedes Salado Puerto came for four weeks to conduct lab analysis; and EAAF anthropologist Silvana Turner conducted exhumations in local cemeteries for four weeks, assisted by Mexican archaeologist Jose Angel Herrera Escobar.

In 2006, Mexican lawyer Ana Lorena Delgadillo and Alma Gomez Caballero, from the NGO *Justicia Para Nuestra Hijos*, worked as consultants on the cases for the entire year. EAAF also had additional support from four consultants for the examinations of peri-mortem trauma and cause of death (see the Cause of Death section below for more information). EAAF is deeply grateful for their generosity and dedication.

EAAF worked closely with the local NGOs *Justicia para Nuestras Hijos* and *Nuestras Hijos de Regreso a Casa* (Our Daughters Back Home), comprised primarily of relatives and advocates of missing women and girls.

The U.S.-based Bode Technology Group, one of the most experienced laboratories in processing bone samples for genetic identification, conducted DNA analysis for EAAF.

Exhumations, Recovery of Remains, and Laboratory Analysis

The recovery and reassociation of many of the female remains has been a significant problem within this project.

In 2005, EAAF worked on a total of 62 cases. EAAF conducted anthropological analysis on 42 complete and incomplete remains,¹⁴ most of them stored at the SEMEFOS of the city of Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez. In addition, EAAF's research into the whereabouts of 24 unidentified female remains led to the recovery of 15 remains from two municipal cemeteries in Ciudad Juárez. EAAF also exhumed the remains of five victims where families requested a review of identification and cause of death. Sixty of the 62 total cases were sent for DNA analysis. In five of these cases, the DNA analysis was able to reassociate five incomplete skeletal remains with five other sets of incomplete skeletal remains. This left the total number of cases under study at 57 individuals.

Originally, the Medical-Legal Institute had sent unidentified female remains

to municipal cemeteries to be buried in mass graves. Initially, the official information provided to EAAF regarding this practice indicated that it had ended in 1997. However, an extensive review of morgue and cemetery records led the team to conclude that the practice continued to take place until at least 2005. Because of this, in 2006 the team exhumed 13 additional female remains from municipal cemeteries in Ciudad Juárez.

Through a deposition presented by EAAF on February 2006 before the Office of Internal Affairs of the Attorney General of Chihuahua, more female remains were found at the former facility of the Medical Examiner's Office in Ciudad Juárez. EAAF analyzed the remains and took samples for genetic testing from 12 incomplete female sets of remains. EAAF's deposition before Internal Affairs originated from discovering the loss of remains under custody, originally recovered at crime scenes. Thus, it is possible that these new remains found at the former facility may be reassociated to other incomplete remains already under examination by EAAF. Genetic analysis is in progress.

Accompanied by Internal Affairs, EAAF found additional remains at the Medical School of the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez.

Overall, since the start of the Juárez mission, EAAF has recovered over 30 female remains and performed laboratory analysis on a minimum of 80 complete and incomplete remains.



Marilú Andrade, whose sister Lilia Alejandra García Andrade was murdered in 2001, and is involved with the NGO Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, at a municipal cemetery in Ciudad Juárez where EAAF found several female remains. *Photo by EAAF.*

Whenever possible, EAAF and EAAF consultants provide information on the cause of death and issue a report.

Interviews with Families and Collection of Samples

During the interviews with families of victims, EAAF gathers pre-mortem (physical data of the victim when she was alive), and information on the circumstances surrounding her disap-

pearance and/or death. EAAF also collects blood and saliva samples for genetic analysis from two to three relatives of each victim.

With the support of local NGOs, the state Attorney General's Office and the Missing Persons Unit of the city of Chihuahua, EAAF interviewed families and collected samples for genetic analysis in the following cities: Ciudad

Juárez, the city of Chihuahua, Parral, Ojinaga, Cuahutemoc, and Mneoqui, all from the state of Chihuahua; and also in Mexico City and the states of Zacatecas, Durango, and Coahuila.

In 2005, EAAF collected blood and saliva samples from 125 relatives of victims and conducted preliminary interviews with 54 families of victims in Ciudad Juárez and the city of Chihuahua. In

2006, EAAF collected samples from an additional 45 relatives, corresponding to 17 families. During 2007, EAAF took samples from twelve relatives corresponding to three families in Ciudad Juárez, Zacatecas and Acapulco.

From 2005 until this writing, EAAF has collected and analyzed samples from a total of 193 people from 75 families.

Genetic Analysis

In 2005, EAAF sent to Bode for genetic analysis samples corresponding to

60 complete and incomplete female remains. Genetic analysis revealed that these in fact belonged to 55 female individuals, since some of the samples officially labeled as different individuals or with no label at all actually corresponded and were reassociated to incomplete remains officially coded with a different number. From these 55 remains, 24 women and girls were positively identified, which was more than 40 percent.

In October 2006, EAAF sent samples

from 50 additional complete and incomplete remains to Bode for genetic analysis. Final processing of these is expected by 2007.

Identifications and Exclusions

To date, EAAF has made 25 positive identifications—20 in Ciudad Juárez and five in the city of Chihuahua—based on anthropological, odontological, and genetic analyses. Two additional tentative identifications have resulted from anthropological and odontological analyses, though in



EAAF member Sofia Egaña packaging samples in the laboratory in Ciudad Juárez. *Photo by EAAF*

each case EAAF has recommended genetic analysis for confirmation.

Three cases from Ciudad Juárez in which families had requested a reexamination of officially identified remains resulted in negative or exclusion results. In other words, EAAF concluded that the remains, which officially identified as corresponding to these three disappeared women, had been misidentified. One of these disappeared women was positively identified by EAAF as another skeleton, while the other two victims returned to the category of disappeared. On the other hand, of the three remains that had been misidentified, two were positively identified by EAAF as other disappeared women.

The identifications and exclusions have been obtained based on a multidisciplinary approach coordinated by EAAF which ensures that the genetic, anthro-

pological, and odontological results and the background information on each case do not contradict each other, as has happened in the past.

Cause of Death

During 2006, EAAF invited the following consultants to investigate the cause of death for remains: US forensic anthropologists Dr. Clyde Snow and Dr. Steve Symes; Argentine forensic doctor Dr. Luis Bosio; and Colombian forensic pathologist Dr. Maria Dolores Morcillo Mendez. EAAF is grateful for their crucial contribution. EAAF is reporting the findings of peri-mortem trauma (trauma occurring around the moment of death) and cause of death from each case to Mexican officials and families of victims.

Additional Tasks

Since February 2006, EAAF has provided official depositions documenting case irregularities to the Office of

Internal Affairs of the Attorney General of Chihuahua. To date, the ongoing investigation has resulted in the suspension of the chief medical examiner of the Ciudad Juárez morgue.

One of the most challenging aspects of the investigation is that there are more remains than reported victims. With the assistance of local NGOs and some officials, EAAF worked to expand the list of disappeared women by visiting poor neighborhoods in Ciudad Juárez and other nearby towns to speak with families who might not have reported their loved one missing. In 2006, the attorney general of Chihuahua approved EAAF's proposal to launch a media campaign in several Mexican states. However, as of the writing of this report, the campaign has not yet been launched.

EAAF investigations continued during 2007.

ENDNOTES

1. Amnesty International. 2005. *Annual Report 2005: Mexico*. www.amnestyusa.org/countries/mexico/document.do?id=ar&yr=2005.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Mariano García, Sean. 2005. *Scapegoats of Juárez: The Misuse of Justice in Prosecuting Women's Murders in Chihuahua, Mexico*. Washington: Latin America Working Group Education Fund. September. <http://www.lawg.org/docs/ScapegoatsofJuarez.pdf>.
4. Amnesty International. 2004. "Mexico: Memorandum to the Mexican Federal Congress on reforms to the Constitutional and criminal justice system." September 28. <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engamr410322004>.
5. CNDH Recommendation 44/98 was condemned by Chihuahuan political figures. See National Commission on Human Rights. 1998. *Recomendación 044/1998*. December 1. <http://www.cndh.org.mx/recomen/1998/044.htm>.
6. Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos. 2003. Informe Especial de la CNDH Sobre los Casos de Homicidio y Desapariciones de Mujeres en el Municipio de Juárez, Chihuahua. <http://www.cndh.org.mx/lacndh/informes/espec/espec2.htm#>
7. "Developments as of September 2003," Amnesty International 08/11/03 AMR 41/026/2003.
8. Federal officials include Guadalupe Morfin, former head of the Special Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women of Ciudad Juárez and former Special Prosecutor María López Urbina of the Federal Attorney General's Office at the *Fiscalía Mixta*.
9. Summary of the progress reports on Juárez Special Commissioner and Special Prosecutor, June 3, 2004.
10. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. 2005. *Report on Mexico produced by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and reply from the Government of Mexico*. Thirty-second session; 10-28 January. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw32/CEDAW-C-2005-OP.8-MEXICO-E.pdf>.
11. Ruiz, Miriam. 2007. "Preocupa a la CIDH feminicidio en todo el país." *Criterios*. April 17. <http://criterios.com/modules.php?name=Noticias&file=article&sid=11342>.
12. European Parliament. 2007. P6_TA-PROV(2007)0431. "European Parliament resolution of 11 October 2007 on the murder of women (feminicide) in Mexico and Central America and the role of the European Union in fighting the phenomenon (2007/2025(INI))." <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0431+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>>.
13. EAAF's assessment of serious forensic problems in the investigation of these cases is more detailed than previous assessments and consistent with the findings of local and international, governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations.
14. In one of these cases, EAAF only sent samples to Bode and conducted an unofficial laboratory review of the remains.