Lessons from the fight against sexual violence and State repression in Mexico

On May 3rd, 2006 members of the Other Campaign clashed with police in the town of Atenco in Mexico State. The authorities were trying to displace merchants who had always sold flowers in the town center on holidays, and the merchants appealed to an organization that, since 2001, had been defending Atenco’s farmland from a proposed airport. In turn, those defending their land appealed to the Other Campaign - a newly-formed national alliance of popular organizations working from below and from the left - and thousands of Other Campaign members turned out to defend the flower merchants, effectively repelling the police. May 4th, 2006 was a different story. Hundreds of local, state and federal police swarmed Atenco with unimaginable violence, beating everyone in sight and breaking into houses without warrants. At the day’s end 2 were dead (murdered by police), 207 arrested (most without formal charges), and 26 women, including Italia Méndez, were submitted to systematic sexual torture.

Come hear Italia speak, as she gives testimony to the events of May 4, 2006 and explains how she and her companions have turned fear into a tool of hope and resistance. Italia Méndez is part of the Campaign Against Political Repression and Sexual Torture. Founded in 2008 by survivors of the events in Atenco, the Campaign seeks to break the silence and forgetting surrounding sexual torture as a means of social control. By denouncing the human rights abuses committed against them, they create tools for resisting the repressive strategies of the State and repairing the social fabric. Italia’s presentation - “we Overcame torture” - will have important lessons for defenders of women's rights, autonomy, human rights, and for activists at large.

Italia Méndez
Campaign Against Political Repression and Sexual Torture

Friday, October 26, 2012: 12 - 1 pm
CLAS Conference Room
Kelly Hall, Room 114
5848 South University Avenue
Light refreshments will be served.

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Sponsored by the University of Chicago Human Rights Program, the Center for Latin American Studies and the Mexico-US Solidarity Network.

This event is free and open to the public.

For more information, please contact Sarah Patton Moberg at spmoberg@uchicago.edu.