

# JUSTICE IN MEXICO

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**News Report**  
**December 2008**

*The number of drug-related killings in Mexico for 2008 surpassed 5,000 in December, bringing the total number of narco-killings to nearly 11,000 deaths since 2005. Alleged Juárez cartel operative Ángel Orlando García Urquiza was arrested in Zapopán, Jalisco, along with "Miss Sinaloa" Elena Zúñiga Huízar and six others. Indeed, it has been a bad month for "narco-novias," after two killings of present and former girlfriends of high profile members of the Sinaloa cartel. The Mexican congress completed new legislation to empower the executive branch to enhance the function of the National Public Security System, as well as enabling legislation (including greater investigative powers for police) to facilitate the implementation of justice sector reforms passed earlier this year. The U.S. ambassador presented the first installment of a \$1.4 billion U.S. assistance package for Mexico's battle against narco-trafficking and related forms of organized crime. Politicians debated the possible application of the death penalty, with a recent poll revealing that nearly 75% of Mexicans favor capital punishment for certain violent crimes, particularly rape, homicide, and kidnapping.*

## LAW AND ORDER

### DRUG VIOLENCE

#### **Cartel-related killings for 2008 surpass 5,000 mark**

By Dec. 19, Mexican newspaper *Reforma's* running tally of drug-related killings, or *ejecuciones*, reached 5,057 deaths. The highest concentration of drug-related killings to date was found in Chihuahua, with 1,642 (32 percent of the national total); Chihuahua averaged 42 killings per week over the past two months. Sinaloa followed with 653 drug-related killings through Dec. 22; Baja California followed with 599, and State of Mexico with 357.

In recent weeks, violence in Baja California appeared to subside after a particularly deadly weekend on Nov. 29-30, when 37 people were killed during a 24-hour period. Nonetheless, criminal groups continued engage in brazen acts of violence. On Dec. 17, a group of gunmen entered the building of Baja California

Office of the Attorney General and opened fire, apparently in an attempt to rescue suspects being detained in the facility. Agents turned out the lights in the building and fired back, forcing the gunmen to flee, but three agents were wounded in the crossfire. Officials said that it was the only time that armed criminals have ever managed to enter the building to perpetrate an attack.

In Durango, which so far this year has had 266 *ejecuciones* (more than double the number in 2007), a group of armed men shot and killed seven people at a dance, echoing similar public mass-killings in recent months in Chihuahua. In Sinaloa, an assassination attempt was made in late November on assistant secretary of public security for the state, Ricardo Serrano Alonso, as he entered his bulletproof car outside his private office. He escaped with superficial wounds.

Drug violence began to increase noticeably in 2004-05, as the Tijuana and Gulf cartels suffered major blows and struggled against encroachment by rivals from Sinaloa. There were approximately 1,500 *ejecuciones* in 2005, another 2,100 in 2006, and nearly 2,300 in 2007. Now, with an unprecedented 5,000 drug-related killings in 2008, the total number of drug-related killings in recent years now stands at nearly 11,000 drug-related *ejecuciones*. Moreover, the escalation in violence has brought a growing number “narco-messages,” torture wounds, beheadings, and other forms of mutilation. The drug violence has primarily affected men, who represented roughly 95% of the victims.

While a small number of innocent bystanders has been caught up in the fray, most victims are typically presumed to have ties to the cartels, or included known government personnel. Indeed, from May 31 through Dec. 19, 2008, there were 381 police officers killed, averaging just over 12 per week. 27 known military personnel were killed during the same period. Earlier this month, Víctor Hugo Moneda Rangel, a director of criminal investigations in the Federal District Attorney General’s Office, was shot to death as he approached his Mexico City home. Moneda Rangel, the third highest-ranking officer in the Federal District judicial police, was in charge of coordinating investigations among the 71 divisions in Mexico City. Investigators believe that Moneda Rangel was killed in reprisal for his work with the judicial police.

On Dec. 22, the bodies of eight soldiers were found decapitated in the southern state of Guerrero, along with the headless body a former director of the state’s preventive police. The bodies were found elsewhere, in a plastic bag outside a commercial retail chain, with a message reading: “For every one [of ours] that you kill, I am going to kill 10 soldiers.” There are thousands of soldiers deployed throughout Mexico.

<b>Significant Federal Police and Military Deployments to Combat Drug Trafficking December 2006-2008*</b>		
<b>Destination of Deployment</b>	<b>Date of Deployment</b>	<b># Forces Deployed</b>
Michoacan	Dec-06	6,700
Baja California	Jan-07	3,300
Guerrero	Jan-07	7,600
Golden Triangle (Chihuahua, Durango, Sinaloa)	Jan-07	n.a.
Guerrero	Jan-07	1,000
Nuevo Leon/Tamaulipas	Feb-07	3,600
Veracruz	May-07	n.a.
Nuevo Leon	Jun-07	1,600
Tabasco	Jun-07	220
Chihuahua	Jan-08	1,000
Chihuahua	Feb-08	n.a.
Baja California	Mar-08	2,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>27,670</b>

Note: Data gathered by Judith Davila. These data represent the number of troops reported by established U.S. and Mexican media sources at the time of deployment, not the total number of troops deployed in Mexico. For strategic military reasons, the Mexican armed has not divulged greater detail on the present status of these deployments. Hence, these figures do not reflect the current number of troops or federal police deployed to combat drug trafficking in any given state.

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The Calderón administration continues to battle the cartels with troop deployments to troubled areas, because of their perceived resistance to corruption. The use of the military to combat the drug cartels has never been articulated as a permanent strategy, but rather to serve as a bridge while municipal, state, and federal police forces are properly vetted and trained for the task. Since December 2006, over 27,000 federal police and soldiers have been dispatched throughout the country in at least 12 identifiable deployments to assist state and local law enforcement; unsubstantiated media reports suggest that as many as 40,000 troops have been committed around the country. While Mexico's armed forces stands at roughly a quarter-million troops, these additional public security duties could potentially compromise their response other national security threats.

Indeed, at the beginning of December, the National Defense Secretariat (Sedena) in a statement to the federal government warned that Mexico's armed forces would not be properly equipped to defend the nation from an invading army. While the war against the cartels was not mentioned explicitly as a reason for this, Mexico's armed forces are obviously heavily committed in this effort.

Many are now looking toward the nascent Federal Police, recently placed under the command of an army general, to assume some of the functions the military has carried out over the past two years. There is also much hope that recent legislation—which gives unprecedented power to the executive branch in designing its public security strategy—will help in strengthening the nation's police forces, and moreover win greater public trust of Mexican law enforcement.

**SOURCES:**

- Cabrera, Javier. "Balean a Subsecretario de Seguridad de Sinaloa." *El Universal* 28 Nov. 2008.  
Sierra, Jorge Luis. "La degradación de la fuerza militar." *El Universal* 3 Dec. 2008.  
Salgado, Agustín and Mirna Servín. "Reacción a operativos, el asesinato de mando de la PGJDF." *La Jornada* 9 Dec. 2008.  
"Ejecutan a siete personas durante un baile en Durango." *El Porvenir* 12 Dec. 2008.  
"Irrumpe comando en Procuraduría de BC." *Reforma* 17 Dec. 2008.

**Recent violence in Tijuana pits "new killers" against remnants of "narco-junior" cartel**

A month after the last remaining founding brother of the Arellano Félix cartel, Eduardo Arellano Félix, was captured, Tijuana suffered a weekend of elevated violence, with 37 *ejecuciones* registered in just 24 hours between Nov. 29-30, including 9 decapitations, 3 of whom were identified as municipal police officers. Also among the dead were a 4-year-old boy, a nephew of Baja California's secretary of Tourism, and four teens between 16 and 17 years old. The wave of violence was answered on Sunday Nov. 31 by a citizen march through Rosarito Beach to demand an end to the violence. The killings have been generally attributed to the drug gang led by Teodoro García Simental, "El Teo," who appears to be battling against remnants of the Arellano Félix cartel.

Within days of the murders, Mexican soldiers and Special Forces operatives arrested six suspects, three of whom were in possession of five AK-47 assault rifles, and were presumed to be members of the criminal group led by García Simental. Until April 2008, García was believed to be an operative of the Arellano Félix cartel, but is now at war with splinter groups of that organization. He is also now believed to be in an alliance with Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán's Sinaloa cartel. García has been particularly elusive to law enforcement, having been reported dead six times over the past two years by official and unofficial sources.

It is alleged that the murder of García's presumed girlfriend, Karla Priscila Carrasco Agüero, sparked the violence that ensued on Nov. 29-30. Carrasco was a model, as well as an *edecán* (a promotional "aide-de-camp") for the telecommunications company Telcel. Recently, a number of "narco-novias" have been caught up in Mexico's drug war, with up with the recent arrest of Miss Sinaloa (see below) and the Dec. 17 discovery of the corpse of Zulema Yulia Hernández, an ex-girlfriend of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzman.

Indicative of possible retaliation by García for Carrasco's death were nine victims found on Nov. 30, whose corpses were accompanied by a note reading: "We are people of 'Fatty' Villarreal, and this is what *el Tres* (another alias of El Teo) did to us." The message is believed to have been intended as a reference to Armando Villarreal Heredia, an Arellano Félix cartel leader and a rival of García.

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The wave of violence in Baja California since September has brought to light what state Attorney General Rommel Moreno identifies as a new crop of young executioners, typically less than 25 years old, who are drawn to Baja California from throughout the country in the hopes of establishing themselves in the unstable and uncertain Tijuana drug trafficking networks. Authorities attribute the arrival of this “new breed” of gunmen to El Teo, who they say recently left Baja California to join forces with the Sinaloa cartel, leaving much of his group’s operations in the hands of these young recruits.

Baja California Public Security Secretary Daniel de la Rosa says that the majority of bodies recovered in recent months are under 25 years old, and many are claimed by families from a variety of states, including Sinaloa, Michoacán, Jalisco, and Veracruz. Authorities say that these “new killers” stand in stark contrast to the “narcojuniors” of the 1990s, who they say originated primarily from upper-middle class Baja California families. This group, they say, are more daring and less disciplined than their predecessors.

**SOURCES:**

- “Dejan nueve decapitados y ‘mensaje’ en Tijuana.” *El Universal* 1 Dec. 2008.  
Jiménez, Benito. “Caen sicarios por decapitados en Tijuana.” *Reforma* 2 Dec. 2008.  
Cordero, Manuel. “Identifican a otros 5 decapitados.” *El Mexicano* 5 Dec. 2008.  
Editorial. “Lo han ‘matado’ 6 veces.” *El Universal* 3 Dec.  
Veledíaz, Juan. “Arrojados e inexpertos, la nueva camada de sicarios.” *El Universal* 8 Dec. 2008.  
Ejecutan a ex de ‘El Chapo’” *Reforma* 24 Dec. 2008.

**Alleged Juarez Cartel operator arrested, along with Miss Sinaloa and other operatives**

All of the major cartels have lost top leaders in recent months, and have often responded with reprisals, as well as with infighting and new alliances. The latest blow came late on December 23, Ángel Orlando García Urquiza, 29, was arrested in Zapopán, Jalisco, along with Laura Elena Zúñiga Huizar and six other alleged operatives. In the process, authorities seized a cache of high caliber weapons, ammunition, and tens of thousands of dollars.

The main suspect is the brother of Ricardo García Urquiza, also known as “El Doctor,” who is believed to be the main operator of the Juárez cartel. Earlier in 2008, Zúñiga, 23, was the winner of the “Nuestra Belleza” beauty contest in Sinaloa, a major drug-trafficking state, earning her the title of “Miss Sinaloa.” Other arrests included Julio César Gástelum Hernández, 34; Angel David Alarcón Urías, 32; Francisco Arce Ontiveros, 29; and Mario Juárez Jiménez, 47. The suspects reportedly originated from the states of Durango, Jalisco, Mexico, Sinaloa, and the Federal District.

The suspects were moved to Mexico City by forces of the Deputy Attorney General for Special Investigation of Organized Crime (SIEDO). Under recent reforms, SIEDO has 96 hours to file criminal charges, or seek permission from a federal judge to grant an *arraigo*. With an *arraigo*, authorities could hold the prisoners without charge for a 40-day period (renewable for a total of up to 80 days).

**SOURCES:**

- “Caen capo, armas ¡y una Miss!” *Reforma*, Dec. 24, 2008.  
Notimex, “Declaran ante SIEDO Miss Sinaloa y detenidos en Jalisco,” Dec. 24, 2008.

**KIDNAPPING**

**U.S. anti-kidnapping consultant kidnapped in Coahuila**

In early December, Mexican and U.S. law enforcement authorities began investigating the kidnapping of an American security consultant who reportedly had helped to resolve roughly 100 kidnappings in Latin America, including Mexico.

The negotiator, Felix Batista, had been conducting a series of seminars for business owners in Coahuila state when he was abducted Dec. 10 outside a Saltillo restaurant, according to media reports. Batista worked for ASI Global, which is based out of Houston, Texas.

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The Washington Post reported that official statistics add up to two kidnappings per day in Mexico but independent crime-fighting groups estimate as many as 500 kidnappings take place each month and most are not reported because families do not want to aggravate the kidnappers, or they suspect the collusion of law enforcement authorities. Speculation over Batista's kidnapping included the possibility that drug groups wanted a ransom or other information from Batista, or even acted in retaliation for his successes.

The head of the state's attorney general was quoted as saying that there did not appear to be signs of violence in the abduction. "As far as we know there was no violence and there was no evidence that the people involved were armed," Jesus Torres Charles was quoted as saying in *La Jornada*. "We know that this person left the establishment and outside he encountered two people, they got into a car and left."

**SOURCES:**

de Guereña, Milagros L. "El crimen organizado ahoga Tijuana con otra oleada de asesinatos," *La Verdad*, 3 December 2008.  
Booth, William. "Kidnap consultant taken in Mexico." *The Washington Post* 16 December 2008.  
Lacey, Marc. "Kidnapping negotiator is now a victim in Mexico." *The New York Times* 15 December 2008.  
Ramos, Leopoldo. "Desaparece en Coahuila el negociador de secuestros." *La Jornada* 16 December 2008.

## **POLICE RESTRUCTURING**

### **Public Security System Law passed by Congress seeks to centralize law enforcement strategy, control**

Both houses of Congress have approved a new Public Security System Law aiming to establish a system of controls to which municipal, state, and federal police, attorneys general, and penal systems will be required to adhere. The law, which will go into effect on Jan. 1, passed both chambers with a wide margin, with the most vocal opposition arising from deputies of the Convergencia party, whose members have characterized the law as a mere gesture toward needed integral public security reforms.

The law redefines the structure of the National Public Security Council, which will be headed by the president, and will include the secretaries of the Interior, National Defense, the Navy, and Public Security as well as sub-national agencies. The law also mandates the establishment of the National Accreditation and Accountability System (*Sistema Nacional de Acreditación y Control de Confianza*) to which all law enforcement personnel will be subjected. Furthermore, the law restores to the National Information Center the responsibility for maintaining criminal and public security personnel databases. This last measure came at the behest of Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) members of the Chamber of Deputies, some of whom made it a condition of their vote in favor of the bill.

The National Public Security Council will be responsible for determining federal resource allocations to the states and the Federal District. The law authorizes the council to withhold funds from states that fail to implement the national emergency telephone service mandated for all states, dispense of funds in manners that diverge from the parameters established by the council, and adhere to the police structure and controls mandated by the council.

In voting in favor of the law and relinquishing the possibility of legislative representation in the council (a measure approved at the behest of leaders of the Revolutionary Institutional Party), Congress has firmly placed the responsibility for articulating public security policy in the hands of the executive branch. Juan Francisco Rivera Bedoya, president of the Security Commission in the House of Deputies, said that the passage of the law is a great step forward for Mexican law enforcement.

The Public Security System Law falls within the framework of the justice and public security reform package passed by the Congress and signed by Pres. Calderón in March of this year.

**Sources:**

Franco, Luciano. "Aprobada, la Ley de Seguridad Pública: certificarán a todos los policías." *La Crónica de Hoy* 5 Dec. 2008.

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"Resaltan aprobación de Ley del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad." *Milenio* 10 Dec. 2008.  
"Obliga nueva ley de seguridad a mayor coordinación entre autoridades." *El Financiero* 14 Dec. 2008.

### **Calderón appoints general to high-ranking position in the SSP**

Public Security Secretary Genaro García Luna has announced the appointment of general Javier del Real Magallanes to the position of assistant secretary for Strategy and Police Intelligence in the Public Security Secretariat (SSP). In that position, Magallanes will assume the responsibility of applying the new model of the Federal Police, which in 2009 will become the largest law enforcement body in the nation, with more than 38,000 officers expected to serve. Magallanes will replace Facundo Rosas Rosas, who will now serve in the position of assistant secretary responsible for prevention, public relations, and human rights.

Magallanes has a diverse background, having most recently led the IV Military Region in Monterrey, Nuevo León. He also served as the director of the National Defense College, commander of the II Military Region, director of Public Security Policies in the Federal District, and Section II chief of Intelligence for the National Defense General Staff. He has also held positions in Mexican embassies in Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

In a 2007 poll conducted by Consulta Mitofsky nearly 75 percent of respondents agreed with integrating military personnel into the nation's police forces. Currently, at least two thirds of Mexico's states have a former military officer at the helm of either the state Public Security Secretariat office or in municipal offices. The popular perception is that the military is less susceptible to corruption than civilian police forces, particularly municipal forces.

The SSP, which has been in the spotlight in recent weeks for its own corruption scandals, is projected to see perhaps the most substantial budgetary increase over 2008 of any law enforcement agency, including the military. Nearly 33 billion pesos (about \$2.5 billion at current exchange rates) have been budgeted for 2009, compared to just under 20 billion pesos for 2008. The SSP is also the second-largest recipient of the first \$197 million installment of the Merida Initiative, the 3-year \$1.4 billion aid package to Mexico to bolster its fight against organized crime.

#### **SOURCES:**

"Incremento de penas a delitos graves." *Consulta Mitofsky* Feb. 2007.  
"Busca SSP incorporar a otro general del Ejército." *El Universal* 5 Dec. 2008.  
Carrasco Araizaga, Jorge. "Los Generales; Toman el poder." *Noroeste* 8 Dec. 2008.

## **AUTO THEFT**

### **Auto thefts up 14 percent from last year, analysis finds**

The Mexican Association of Insurance Institutions (AMIS) reported that from January to September 2008 auto thefts nationwide had increased by 14 percent over the same period last year.

In all, a total of 57,294 automobiles have been reported stolen in 2008, the highest number since 1998, according to AMIS. The Federal District saw an increase of 10 percent, Jalisco an increase of 24 percent, Mexico State an increase of 1 percent, and the rest of the nation saw an increase of 22 percent. Leading the states were the Federal District with 11,507 stolen, Mexico State with 8,938, and Nuevo León with 3,646. Of the more than 57,000 cars stolen, only 22,862 were eventually recovered.

Mario Crosswell, director of ORCA, a company dedicated to finding and recovering stolen vehicles in Mexico, expects that 2008 will be the worst year for auto thefts in Mexico's history. Most notable to Crosswell, though, is a change in the nature of the thefts, with an unprecedented number of cars being stolen for use in organized crime activities, and not for sale. Crosswell, who has been at the helm of ORCA for 10 years, estimated that in the past, of 100 vehicles stolen 90 or so would be for sale as-is, 5 or 6 to sell for parts, and maybe 1 for use in criminal activities. This year, he calculates, 20 to 25 percent are stolen for use by criminal gangs.

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**SOURCES:**

Becerra, Jessika. "Crece robo de autos 14% en 2008 – AMIS." *Reforma* 1 Dec. 2008.  
Herrera, Rolando. "Advierten que criminales roban los vehiculos para usarlos en sus ilicitos." *Reforma* 14 Dec. 2008.

## U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

### U.S. releases first payment of \$1.4 billion Merida Initiative

The U.S. government released to Mexico the first installment of the \$400 million allocated as part of the Merida Initiative, a 3-year, \$1.4 billion aid package to assist Mexico in its fight against organized crime. At a signing ceremony for the \$197 million payment, U.S. Ambassador Tony Garza said that the package is "the most significant effort ever undertaken" by the U.S. and Mexican governments in jointly combating the international drug trade.

The federal Attorney General's Office (PGR), scarred in recent weeks by corruption scandals, is the largest recipient of funds. It is slated to receive \$57 million, which will come in the form of information technology for its central offices, as well as laboratory equipment and personnel training. The Public Security Secretariat (SSP) will receive \$52 million for technology required for its National Police Registry, as well as assistance in building a new maximum-security prison. Another beneficiary will be the Health Secretariat, which will receive \$15 million to increase oversight and coordination of the nation's clinics responsible for treating drug addiction. In accordance with the original terms of the plan, the military will receive a smaller appropriation than the police forces, which it will use primarily to purchase surveillance equipment.

The 2009 National Drug Threat Assessment released this month by the U.S. Justice Department's National Drug Intelligence Center says that Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) pose the greatest organized crime threat to the United States. This is due in part to the fact that "[U.S.-based] gangs are becoming increasingly involved in wholesale-level drug trafficking, aided by their connections with drug trafficking organizations, particularly Mexican and Asian DTOs. The report also indicates that gangs are increasingly conducting their activities across the borders with both Canada and Mexico. Mexican DTOs, the report finds, pose a particular threat because of their varied transportation routes, advanced communication capabilities, and ties to U.S. gangs. Law enforcement agencies in the United States have reported Mexican DTO distribution networks in at least 230 U.S. cities, concentrated primarily in the southwest, but extending to all regions of the country and into Canada.

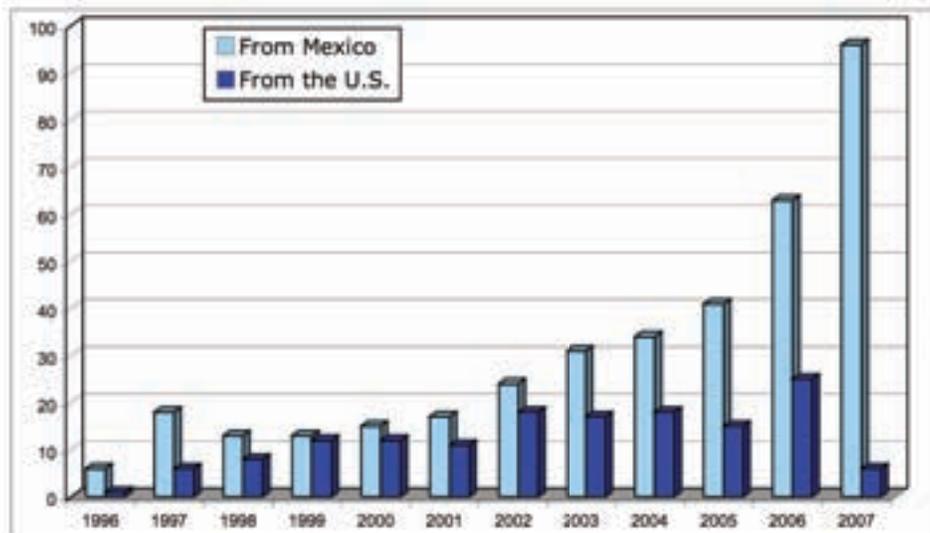
While the flow of drugs north into the United States is the most immediate concern addressed by bilateral law enforcement efforts, both nations recognize the need to tackle the rampant flow of weapons from the United States into Mexico. The Brookings Institution estimates that roughly 2,000 guns enter Mexico every day, and studies conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms have found that at least 90 percent of weapons confiscated in Mexico originated in the United States. Security experts point to lax gun control laws in the southern states as key in enabling weapons trafficking. Moreover, Mexican border patrol officials indicate that only 1 of 20 vehicles entering Mexico from the north are searched, due to limited resources and personnel. 79 million people crossed through California's six existing ports of entry alone, and this month California Gov. Schwarzenegger announced the construction of another crossing, Otay Mesa East, to be completed by 2014.

**SOURCES:**

"U.S. releases first part of \$400 million anti-drug package to Mexico." *The Associated Press* 4 Dec. 2008.  
Cruz Martínez, Ángeles. "Recibirá la Ssa 15 mdd de la Iniciativa Mérida." *La Jornada* 6 Dec. 2008.  
Otero, Silvia. "Sedena, menos favorecida con el plan Mérida." *El Universal* 7 Dec. 2008.  
"U.S. to build Mexico border crossing to ease waits." *Reuters* 8 Dec. 2008.  
"National Drug Threat Assessment 2009." *National Drug Intelligence Center Annual Report*.

## 2008 brings possible new record in extraditions from Mexico to the United States

Three new extraditions on Dec. 20 brought the total number of Mexican extraditions to the United States to 85. The U.S. Attorney General's office indicated that this exceeded last year's record number, which the Associated Press placed at 82 extraditions.



Sources: Embassy of Mexico Fact Sheet, "Rounding Up Fugitives," May 12, 2004; "U.S. and Mexico Team Up to Arrest Mexican Fugitive from Justice (2004-2005); Matthew T. Hall, "Gonzales lauds Mexico's extradition of 15 to U.S.," The San Diego Union Tribune, January 21, 2007; and information requested from the U.S. Embassy.

There has been a significant increase in the number of extraditions from Mexico recorded in recent years, with especially notable gains since 2006. However, according to State Department information obtained by the Justice in Mexico Project, the number of extraditions in 2007 was 97. Moreover, gains have not been reciprocated with similar increases in the number of U.S. extraditions to Mexico, primarily because few extraditions have been sought the Mexican government.

### SOURCES:

Associated Press, "Mexico extradites record 85 suspects to US in 2008." Dec. 20, 2008.

## TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

### CORRUPTION

#### Hundreds of Tijuana officers suspended - and then returned to duty

Faced with spiraling violence in Tijuana and allegations of corruption within the city's police force, law enforcement officials suspended hundreds of municipal officers last month who were sent to an academy for "retraining." By late December - after taking courses in ethics, firearms use and physical education - about 400 of the officers had returned to patrolling the city.

The officers had reportedly been working in the eastern and central part of the city. Some media reported that these are areas where drug trafficking cells led by Teodoro Garcia Simental, "El Teo," have been involved in a number of high-profile murders and other criminal activities.

During their absence, the officers were replaced with federal and state officers as well as members of the military. The suspensions followed the detention by federal officials of 21 Tijuana municipal officers - some who had held higher-level posts - suspected of working with organized crime groups.

**Sources:**

Dibble, Sandra. "Many TJ police temporarily replaced by state, federal officers." *The San Diego Union-Tribune* 18 Nov. 2008.  
Marosi, Richard. "500 police officers replaced in Tijuana." *Los Angeles Times* 19 Nov. 2008.  
Ramirez, Ana and Ovalle Fausto. "Regresan policias a patrullar ciudad." *Frontera* 21 December, 2008.

### **Holiday efforts to crack down on customs and law enforcement corruption may be working**

More than a million Mexican immigrants who live in the United States cross the border this time of the year to spend the holidays with their families. One study has found that a government effort to crack down on corruption targeting these visitors seems to be working.

Many immigrants and other shoppers return to Mexico with cars laden with gifts for the holidays. Since these gifts are subject to import duty taxes, this can result in abuses by customs and other law enforcement officials, who have been known to extract bribes in exchange for allowing visitors to avoid import duties.

The Mexican government tried to address these concerns by establishing the "Paisano Program" about 15 years ago to help out holiday travelers with information on what they can and cannot bring into the country and providing them with forms to declare imported items. This year, the Mexican government is reportedly expanding the program along sections of the border such as Tijuana. *The San Diego Union-Tribune* reports that the program is opening nine booths this year in comparison to three the year before.

Visitors also will be able to bring in up to \$300 worth of goods per person "duty-free" through January 10, compared to smaller quantities during normal times of the year, according to media reports. *The Union-Tribune* also published information from a survey conducted by the Colegio de la Frontera Norte of 8,000 immigrants in 10 cities traveling into Mexico for the holidays. The study shows that 5 percent of people who were polled said that they had encountered corruption compared to 19 percent in 2002. One of the researchers, Alex Díaz Bautista, said those surveyed gave the Paisano Program a 98 percent approval rating.

Efforts to reach out to the travelers extend as far as Mexico's interior where the seasonal visitors will be allowed to use their cars any day of the week without facing fines through mid-January, according to Guillermo Velasco, the Secretary of the Environment of the state of Mexico. Residents are normally restricted to using their cars during certain days of the week to reduce auto emissions.

The nationwide Paisano Program lasts through January 9, and the National Institute of Migration plans on assigning more than 1,000 "observers" in 400 areas of the country to monitor for abuses.

**Sources:**

De la Vega, Norma. "Paisano Program eases Mexican travelers' trip home for the holidays." *The San Diego Union-Tribune* 13 Dec. 2008.  
Martinez, Edith. "Exentan a migrantes de restricciones vehiculares en Valle de Mexico." *El Universal* 2 Dec. 2008.  
Posada Gardia, M. "Alistan programas de apoyo a vacunistas." *La Jornada* 16 Dec. 2008.

### **Mexican President shares information on police test results**

Almost half of the county's police forces who were tested failed a series of psychological and background checks to determine whether they are recommended - or not - for service, according to Mexican President Felipe Calderon.

The statement was made during a parliamentary session of the Senate. The tests are based on international standards of professional quality and Mexican president Felipe Calderon said that the tests were given to 56,000 members of the country's national and regional forces.

The number of officers who received a "not recommended" rating was close to 50 percent. Different media reports provided different breakdowns for whether this applies to just the federal forces or local,

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state and federal forces. According to Calderon, 41.7 percent passed the evaluation and 49.4 did not pass, and the remainder did not finish the test.

Mexico has 203,000 state police, 152,000 municipal police and 20,000 federal police. They are being evaluated by a special branch of the Mexican *Fiscalia*, or accountability office. Calderon did not say what would happen to the people who were deemed to be “not recommended.”

Among the states with the highest rankings of “not recommended” officers included Baja California with 88.9 percent, Zacatecas, with 70.7 percent and Coahuila with 69 percent.

Some critics say the tests are better suited for law enforcement groups that have a stronger tradition of accountability rather than a country like Mexico that continues to struggle with cleaning up its police forces and where corruption has arguably been a systemic problem as well as a personal one.

**Sources:**

“Calderon dice que la mitad de los policas de Mexico ‘no son recomendables’.” *El Mundo* (Spain) 28 Nov. 2008.  
Ordaz, Pablo. “El presidente Calderon afirma que la mitad de la policia Mexicana ‘no es recommendable.’” *El Pais* 29 Nov. 2008.

### **DF Citizens’ council: Corruption and cell phones in prisons allows for extortion rings to flourish**

Corruption within prisons, as well as lax cell phone controls, is facilitating the operations of extortion rings from within the prison walls in blatant disregard of the law, according to the president of the citizens’ advisory council on public security in the Federal District.

Meyer Klip Gervitz, president of the council, said that some prisons have installed devices that are intended to block such calls, but he suspects that authorities are in collusion with prisoners so that the calls can be made from inside the prisons. He said that studies done by the advisory group have identified three prisons in Mexico’s interior that seem to be the source of the extortion calls. Klip said that telephone companies should make it harder for people to buy and use chips that can be used to mask the geographic origin of the calls and that authorities involved in permitting cell phone activities within the prisons should be punished.

**Sources:**

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## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **New national program to tackle government accountability**

In an attempt to clean house in Mexico, the government is embarking on an extensive campaign to make government workers more accountable for their actions.

The *Programa Nacional de Rendicion de Cuentas, Transparencia y Combate a la Corrupcion* will attack these problems using a multi-pronged approach that includes posting information on the Internet that details how money is spent, and embarking on a campaign to encourage a “culture of legality.”

As part of the new program, Mexican president Felipe Calderon said the government is also trying to encourage ordinary residents to denounce bureaucrats who solicit bribes or misuse funds, either through complaints filed through an Internet page or by calling a new 1-800 number.

The program is functioning under the direction of the Secretary of the Public Function, which is headed by Salvador Vega Casilla who was accompanied by Pres. Calderon during a formal announcement of the program this month. The public event included testimony from Mexican businessman Ruben Orihuela Santos who also shared his experience of being extorted by a government agency – *Luz y Fuerza del Centro* - that controls electricity.

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Orihuela said he denounced the activities to the federal government and worked with them to collect additional evidence of the alleged improprieties. Orihuela said he was pleased with the results. "Now it is even more clear to me that in order to stop the corruption it is necessary to have the courage to denounce...to not let ourselves be intimidated by people who abuse their position and power," he was quoted as saying in a press release provided by the office of the Secretary of the Public Function.

Calderon said his government has been taking steps to punish workers who are suspected of misusing public funds. According to him, over the past two years more than 11,500 public servants in the federal government have been sanctioned about \$380 million dollars. In addition, "denuncias penales" were filed against 56 people for corrupt activities within the federal government. Calderon singled out *Petroleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX), *Distribuidora e Impulsora Comercial Conasupo* (DICONSA), Mexican Customs Agency, and federal government agencies involved in public works projects as being the most susceptible to corruption and where, according to him, the government has broken several networks involved in illicit activities.

The national program appears to be aimed at the branches of government that are not already being scrutinized by Operativo Limpieza, which is targeting corruption within police and justice government agencies.

**Sources:**

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Secretaria de Funcion Publica. Press release. 9 Dec. 2008. Available at: [http://portal.funcionpublica.gob.mx:8080/wb3/wb/SFP/comunicado\\_091208](http://portal.funcionpublica.gob.mx:8080/wb3/wb/SFP/comunicado_091208)

## TRANSPARENCY

### Transparency International: Bribery and Mexican businesses

Mexico scored poorly in an international ranking of companies that engage in bribery abroad, according to results from the corruption watchdog group Transparency International.

Calling for stricter anti-bribery standards on a global level, Transparency International released its ranking of how often companies based in emerging markets are perceived to "routinely engage in bribery when doing business abroad." Mexico ranked near the bottom of the list of 22 ranked countries.

The score for each country was based on a scale of 1-10, with a higher score indicating that the companies from that country are less likely to bribe when doing business abroad. For example, Belgium and Canada shared the first place (8.8) which means firms from these countries are less likely to engage in bribery when operating abroad. The United States scored in 9<sup>th</sup> place, with an 8.1, and Mexico scored in the 20<sup>th</sup> place with 6.6.

The ranking includes 22 leading international and regional exporting countries and the results were based on the responses from 2,742 senior business executives, according to Transparency International's web site. Mexico scored lower than India, Brazil and Italy but better than China and Russia.

**Sources:**

- Transparency International webpage. Report available from this address: [http://www.transparency.org/news\\_room/latest\\_news/press\\_releases/2008/bpi\\_2008\\_en](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news/press_releases/2008/bpi_2008_en)

### Concern over drug trafficking money entering political campaigns

Concern over money from drug traffickers infiltrating Mexico's elections next year is putting pressure on Mexico's electoral oversight agency – the Instituto Federal Electoral - to ensure that the funding sources are accounted for.

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But the question remains as to whether that should be the role of the IFE or that of other federal investigatory agencies. The IFE has been provided with the legal power to review bank and other financial documents related to electoral campaigns. However, some observers say that this role should be the responsibility of federal authorities who investigate criminal activities – not electoral entities.

Nonetheless, the National Action Party (PAN) has been demanding that the IFE explain how they are guaranteeing that drug money does not infiltrate the electoral campaign of 2009. Leaders of the PAN as well as the PRD - Partido de la Revolucion Democratica – recently sent a letter to the IFE president demanding additional information on the how they will address this concern. Leonardo Valdes Zurito, president of the IFE, said he's working with representatives of the eight political parties so that they can also take measures to prevent the infiltration of drug money into their activities.

Valdes said the IFE will use their legal powers to avoid the infiltration of drug money in campaigns but that combating organized crime is the responsibility of other agencies. He said the agency is willing to work with other federal investigation groups, such as the Federal Attorney General's office, or PGR, to help ensure the campaigns are clean.

**Sources:**

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## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### JUSTICE REFORM

#### **Kidnapping still in the spotlight as National Security Pact reaches its 100-day evaluation**

This month Congress passed anti-kidnapping legislation in accordance with its responsibilities under the National Security Pact signed in August, which has recently undergone its 100-day assessment. The anti-kidnapping bill lays the groundwork for future laws to prevent, investigate, and punish kidnapping.

The law consists of a reform to article 73 of the constitution that will allow legislators to draft laws that specifically address crimes involving kidnapping. The vote came roughly a week before the remains of Silvia Vargas, daughter of a prominent Mexico City businessman kidnapped in 2007, were positively identified. The Vargas kidnapping received renewed attention in the Mexican press after the kidnapping and murder of teenager Fernando Martí this summer. Like the Martí case, Vargas' kidnapping and murder have amplified public outcry over the impunity with which such crimes are committed in Mexico. According to Holland-based NGO Pax Cristi, Mexico, Iraq and India lead the world in kidnappings, and senator Santiago Creel of the National Action Party (PAN) lamented that an estimated 97 percent of kidnappings nationwide go unpunished.

While the move by Congress shows some progress on the part of the legislature in fulfilling its obligations under the National Security Pact signed by representatives of the three branches of government, business, the press, and civil society in August of this year, a recent 100-day review conducted by several of the nation's universities and civil organizations shows that many of the joint commitments made upon signing the pact have not been fulfilled. In their study, the participating universities found that only 50 percent of the commitments made for the first 100 days had been realized, with the most significant deficiency resting on municipal governments. Among the measures not yet completed is a strengthening of the system for reporting corruption and other violations committed by public servants. Many of the remaining commitments address the process of the pact itself, such as the creation of citizen organizations to oversee and evaluate the fulfillment of commitments made in the pact at federal, state

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and local levels, and the establishment of indicators for evaluating progress in implementing the agreed measures. It was noted, however, that 72 percent of states had complied to some degree with this last measure.

For his part, Pres. Calderón said that his administration had complied entirely with its commitments under the pact, although there remains much work to be done. Citing numbers released by the Public Security Secretariat revealing that the daily kidnapping rate has dropped by 18 percent since signing the pact, Calderón acknowledged that the rate of 2.4 kidnappings per day is still alarming. Calderón also pointed out that since the pact was signed authorities have arrested members from 52 criminal groups, and freed 184 kidnapping victims. Additionally, he called on Congress to pass needed legislation to address threats to public security.

**SOURCES:**

- Press Release. *México Unido Contra la Delincuencia* 28 Nov. 2008.  
Pavón, A. Olivier. "Bajó 18 por ciento el índice de secuestros: Genaro García Luna." *La Crónica de Hoy* 29 Nov. 2008.  
"Se cumplen sólo 5 de los 74 puntos del Acuerdo Nacional de Seguridad." *El Porvenir* 29 Nov. 2008.  
Arvizu, Juan and Andrea Merlos. "Cámara reforma Carta Magna para combatir plagio y mafia." *El Universal* 10 Dec. 2008.  
"Aprueba Senado que Congreso pueda expedir ley general de secuestro." *Milenio* 11 Dec. 2008.

**Congress passes legislation allowing police to infiltrate criminal organizations with anonymity**

Congress passed in mid-December secondary legislation clarifying parameters regarding police powers granted by the justice reform package signed into law in late March of this year. Under the so-called *Miscelánea Penal*, police are given the power to gather information and engage in undercover operations acting anonymously under an assigned number known only to the Attorney General's Office (PGR). The law stipulates that police may only engage in such activities in order to prevent a crime, and not in investigating crimes already committed (which are presently reserved for judicial police and prosecutors). The legislation also allows information obtained from telephone surveillance to be used as evidence in court hearings, but only if obtained with the authorization of a judge. Such will also be the case with evidence gained from home searches. Furthermore, the bill limits detention without charges to 40 days, with up to an additional 40 days if deemed necessary.

One of the goals of the justice reform package passed this past spring is to professionalize Mexico's police forces, and to give them increased investigative responsibilities. While legislators more or less unanimously agree on the importance of accomplishing this, several lawmakers, including Revolutionary Democratic Party congressman Arturo Escobar y Vega, urged the executive to put into place the nationwide system of police controls mandated by the also recently-passed Public Security System Law.

"From 35 thousand police we [now] have nationwide that can investigate, [that number] will rise to 400 thousand... the bad news has to do with these ample powers that we are giving to the police. Even today... the majority of us have an enormous lack of confidence... in the way we relate with the police in Mexico," he said.

**SOURCES:**

- Garciaheredia, Juan. "Prevén mayor claridad y justicia con 'miscelánea penal' aprobada." *El Mexicano* 5 Dec. 2008.  
Franco, Luciano. "Miscelánea penal primer paso para revertir 90% de impunidad criminal." *La Crónica de Hoy* 15 Dec. 2008.

**Deputy Felipe Borrego Estrada to head justice reforms**

Pres. Calderón has named federal deputy Felipe Borrego Estrada to head the implementation of the constitutional justice reforms passed by Congress in the spring of this year. He replaces José Luis Santiago Vasconcelos, who died in a plane crash in Mexico City alongside then Interior Minister Juan Camilo Mouriño. Borrego Estrada, a member of the National Action Party (PAN), served as president of the Supreme Court of Zacatecas from 1998 to 2004, and is currently secretary of the Justice Committee in the Chamber of Deputies and PAN representative for the Committee for State Reform.

**SOURCE:**

- "Se encargará Borrego Estrada de la reforma penal." *Milenio* 8 Dec. 2008.

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## DEATH PENALTY

### Debate over reinstating the death penalty in Mexico continues to heat up

A proposal from Coahuila's Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) governor Humberto Moreira to reinstate the death penalty in that state quickly sparked a nationwide debate involving state and federal legislators, governors, civic organizations, and the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH). Moreira's proposal applies narrowly to kidnappers who murder and/or mutilate their victims, which has tapped into emotions and ongoing discourse surrounding the issue of kidnappings, and led some to accuse Moreira of using the issue for political gain. The death penalty is currently banned by Mexico's constitution, so a constitutional reform would be required in the federal legislature in order to apply the punitive measure in individual states.

Coahuila, a border state between Sonora and Chihuahua, is not known to be a particularly violent state, but neither has it been immune from violence. Perhaps coincidentally, a U.S. kidnapping expert was abducted in Coahuila earlier this month. According to the newspaper *Reforma*, the state had accumulated 53 cartel-related killings in 2008 as of Dec. 19, substantially higher than its 2007 total, but still the lowest of all six border states.

Moreira's proposal to amend articles 14 and 22 of the constitution was approved by Coahuila's congress by virtue of its PRI majority, and sent to San Lázaro for deliberation in the federal House of Deputies. Coahuila lawmakers from the National Action Party (PAN) objected to the bill on the grounds that measures to reform the constitution should originate in the legislature, and not from the executive branch. Graco Ramírez Garrido, Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) senator from Morelos, dismissed the legislation as an "electoral strategy" of the PRI to use the issue of public security as a political banner. He went on to argue that the death penalty has not served as a viable deterrent in the United States, specifically citing the case of Texas, which maintains a high crime rate despite its status as the U.S. state that most aggressively applies capital punishment. Speaking on behalf of her party, PAN deputy Claudia Sánchez Juárez similarly expressed that the most effective means of reducing crime in Mexico will be successfully pursuing and capturing those responsible, not increasing punitive measures.

Nonetheless, in a national poll published this month by the polling agency Consulta Mitofsky, a vast majority of respondents (94.8 percent) approved of increasing penalties for violent crimes. A smaller number, though still a strong majority (74.8 percent), approved of applying the death penalty for certain crimes, particularly rape, homicide, and kidnapping.

For his part, José Luis Soberanes, president of the National Human Rights Commission, expressed his stance that implementing the death penalty would be a step backward in combating crime in Mexico, and would be a danger given the inefficiency of prosecutors in investigating crimes, as well as a lack of professionalism in its auxiliary bodies, particularly the Judicial Police. He also pointed out that applying the death penalty would break with international treaties to which Mexico has signed on. He characterized the proposal as a red herring, emphasizing that ending impunity will be possible "only as a result of professional investigations, made by trained police and authorities not affiliated with criminal organizations as frequently happens."

Interior Minister Fernando Gómez Mont also expressed his objections to the proposal, echoing Soberanes' concerns regarding international treaties. Nevertheless, he said that it is a debate that must occur. He also pointed out that Pres. Calderón presented an initiative earlier this year proposing life sentences for kidnappers who murder their victims.

#### SOURCES:

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- Cárdenas, Lorenzo. "Impulsa Coahuila la pena de muerte." *Reforma* 3 Dec. 2008.
- "Incremento de penas a delitos graves." *Consulta Mitofsky* 4 Dec. 2008.
- "Ven fines electorales en propuesta de pena de muerte." *El Universal* 6 Dec. 2008.

## PRESS FREEDOM

### Number of killed journalists in Mexico disputed

Even as Mexico's National Commission of Human Rights announced that 45 journalists have been killed in Mexico since 2000, the head of a federal unit charged with investigating crimes against journalists expressed doubt the numbers could be that high, according to Mexican media.

The Human Rights Commission identified Tamaulipas as being the most dangerous place for journalists to work in, with eight reporters being killed there over the past eight years. Chihuahua had six cases of journalists killed. Four journalists have been killed in each of the states of Veracruz, Oaxaca and Michoacan. The Commission called for government to do more to investigate and capture suspects in these cases, as well as in other crimes against journalists. It was unclear if the numbers provided by the Commission include cases of disappeared journalists who are also presumed to be dead. The numbers are significantly higher than the numbers accounted for by the New York City-based Committee to Protect Journalists, which uses a specific set of criteria, such as whether the reporter is killed in the line of duty.

The head of the Federal Attorney General's special unit that investigates crimes against journalists expressed doubt about the numbers, and disputed claims that Mexico is the most dangerous country to practice journalism. "There is an erroneous perception that Mexico is the country where the most murders of journalists take place, but this is not true," said Octavio Orellana Wiarco, the head of the special unit, according to *El Universal* newspaper.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has counted 14 reporters killed in Mexico from 1992 to October 2008. According to their statistics, Mexico ranks among the "top 20" countries for journalist killings, though it ranks in the bottom half of the list. The top countries where journalists have been killed, according to the Committee, include Iraq, Algeria, Russia and Colombia.

Orellana said that in some cases journalists are working with drug cartels, which places them in greater danger for retaliation by rival groups. He would not say exactly how many journalists may be in collusion with organized crime activities, but did say that 16 percent of threats and violent behavior directed against journalists are committed by organized crime groups.

Orellana's assessment is not widely held in Mexico, though the deaths of some journalists do leave a trace of uncertainty over the exact reasons for why they were killed. The *Dallas Morning News* explored this sensitive angle in their 2005 story of the killing of radio police reporter Lupita Garcia, 39, who was gunned down by suspected cartel members. The case illustrates the fine line that crime journalists balance between cultivating contacts in the drug world and becoming messengers or apologists for particular gangs.

Orellana shared statistics that break down some of the crimes against journalists in 2008. According to him, a total of 274 crimes were reported against journalists in Mexico just this year. Of that total, 107 were threats and 31 were abuses of authority, according to Orellana. He shared additional statistics that place Oaxaca as the state with the largest number of crimes against journalists, with 52 cases. The Federal District comes second with 48, and the State of Mexico and Tabasco had 15 cases each.

Despite questions raised over the exact numbers of journalists killed, abuses against journalists clearly continue. Among a list of crimes the human rights commission has compiled is the aggression against photographer Israel Garcia Gurrola, of *La Voz de la Frontera*, on November 8. Garcia was supposedly targeted by federal preventive police for taking pictures of a military convoy. Also in November, grenades were thrown at the offices of *El Debate* in Culiacan. While no one was injured, the incident was seen as an act of intimidation.

**SOURCES:**

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## AROUND THE STATES

**Mexico City police to receive increased benefits, says Ebrard**

Marcelo Ebrard, head of government of the Federal District, has announced plans to introduce legal reforms to raise the living and working conditions for the city's police officers. Included in the proposals will be to provide a health care program designed specifically for law enforcement officers, as well as to build a hospital in the city exclusively for them. Also included will be measures to guarantee adequate living conditions for police officers and their families and access to education for their children. A second initiative will include provisions for providing officers with adequate representation when faced with job-related legal inquiries.

The Federal District Attorney General Miguel Ángel Mancera announced in early December similar measures for officers of the Mexico City judicial police. An agreement has been struck with the Finance Secretariat and the Federal District Housing Institute to provide judicial police officers with housing credits to be used to rent homes owned and managed by developers Homex and DeMet. The rental periods will be for five years, followed by an option to buy.

In a speech given during an early "Day of the Police" celebration, Ebrard underscored the necessity of providing police with dignified living and working conditions in order to address the security concerns voiced by citizens of Mexico City.

**SOURCES:**

Sierra, Arturo. "Anuncian créditos de vivienda para PJ." *Reforma* 1 Dec. 2008.  
Corona, Juan. "Alistan reformas a favor de policías." *Reforma* 17 Dec. 2008.

**President of Nuevo León's Supreme Court warns justice reforms will fail without increased funds**

Gustavo Adolfo Guerrero, president of Nuevo León's Supreme Court (TSJ), has asked the state government for a 32 percent increase in his budget, saying that it is necessary for the imminent addition of 53 new criminal infractions eligible for trial by oral proceedings in this border state.

Guerrero said the funds are needed to construct new courtrooms that will be necessary for handling the increased caseload. The state government has proposed a substantially smaller increase of 8 percent to the state's courts, which operated on a 2008 budget of 605 million pesos (roughly \$45 million U.S. dollars at current exchange rates). Of the 678 million peso budget proposed by the state government for 2009, just over 98 percent is allocated for current operations, leaving less than 2 percent, or 11.4 million pesos, for needed improvements. By comparison, nearly 1 billion pesos will go toward servicing the state's debt.

Members of the state legislature have vowed to work to secure the needed funds for the TSJ. Óscar Cano Garza, president of the Housing Committee in the Chamber of Deputies, expressed concern that the executive branch is not living up to its commitment to improving the justice system in Nuevo León, and indicated that he will work to secure even more funds than the TSJ has requested.

**SOURCES:**

"Le hacen más justicia a deuda que al Tribunal." *Milenio* 26 Nov. 2008.  
Medina Espinoza, Alberto. "Luchan por incrementar el presupuesto del Poder Judicial." *El Porvenir* 19 Dec. 2008.

### **Vice president of Oaxaca bar association warns that low salaries for judges will breed corruption**

Saúl Ángel Villarreal, vice president of the Oaxaca bar association has warned that low pay for state judges, particularly in Oaxaca, will likely compel some to accept bribes and engage in other acts of corruption. Federal judges, he said, earn roughly 120,000 pesos a month (roughly \$9,000 in U.S. dollars at current exchange rates), while state-level judges typically earn between 40-50,000 pesos a month (about \$3,000-3,750 in U.S. dollars). In Oaxaca, that number is closer to 27,000 pesos in the city of Oaxaca, and 23,000 pesos in rural areas. By comparison, the 2008 daily minimum wage in Mexico of around 50 pesos per day amounts to roughly 1,500 pesos per month, or about \$112 U.S. dollars.

**SOURCE:**

Cruz, Sayra. "Injusto, sueldo de jueces." *El Tiempo* 30 Nov. 2008.  
Minimum wage data from Servicio de Administración Tributaria, <http://www.sat.gob.mx>

### **Oral trials in Baja California beginning 2009**

Gilberto Daniel González Solís, a justice liaison for the government of Baja California, announced that the state's new justice sector reforms, including oral trials, will begin in Mexicali, the state's capital, in the first days of 2009. Mexicali recently received final approval for the construction of a new courthouse with video- equipped courtrooms and audio recording technology. Two more courthouses are also planned for Ensenada and Tijuana. Oral trials are expected to begin in those cities in 2010 and 2011, respectively. The Mexicali courthouse is expected to cost 140 million pesos, and will include 6 courtrooms, alongside an alternative dispute resolution center that will focus on resolving certain grievances via mediation.

According to the federal justice reform package passed by Congress in the spring of this year, the states have eight years in which to fully implement such reforms, which will bring about a transition from the inquisitorial, primarily-written criminal procedures presently used in most Mexican states to an accusatorial system that includes oral trial procedures.

**SOURCE:**

Barroso, Fernando. "En 2009, los primeros juicios orales en la capital del estado." *El Sol de Tijuana* 13 Dec. 2008.

The Justice in Mexico Project *researches justice sector and rule of law developments in Mexico at the national and sub-national levels. Through its host institution, the Trans-Border Institute (TBI) at the University of San Diego, the Project disseminates research organized under three broad categories related to the rule of law: law and order, transparency and accountability, and access to justice.*

*As a research output, the Project produces monthly reports based on news monitoring of federal- and state-level developments in Mexico. An archive of these reports is available at <http://www.justiceinmexico.org>. Click on the news tab and then the news archive selection to access the archive. To provide financial support for our organization, please visit: <http://www.sandiego.edu/tbi/support>. Finally, please report any questions, corrections, or concerns to [transborder@sandiego.edu](mailto:transborder@sandiego.edu).*

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