

JUSTICE IN MEXICO

WWW.JUSTICEINMEXICO.ORG
TRANS-BORDER INSTITUTE



News Report March 2009

Drug war violence remains high this year, with an average of more than 400 killings per month in the first quarter of 2009. While cartel-related killings remained highest in Chihuahua, there appears to be a shift in the landscape of cartel-related violence in other states, with killings surging in Durango and Guerrero. Mexican authorities continued to battle against organized crime groups, with major military deployments to Chihuahua and the military takeover of the Ciudad Juárez municipal police force and state penitentiary. Government troops and police clashed with drug traffickers in several states, and succeeded in capturing Vicente Zambada, the son of one of Mexico's major cartel bosses. Efforts to improve municipal police through a federal grant program, SUBSEMUN, received much discussion in the press. In the lead up to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Mexico, Mexican President Felipe Calderón pressed the United States to take more responsibility for U.S. drug demand and weapons trafficking. Meanwhile, U.S. officials announced the arrest of 50 suspected cartel members in addition to the more than 700 already captured in the United States, as well as major busts targeting bulk cash smuggling, arms dealing, and corruption among U.S. border security personnel. In Mexico, there were efforts to promote greater transparency and accountability, with new measures to promote access to information and the firing and arrest of dozens of police officers in different states around the country. Efforts to promote access to justice included new attempts to protect Mexican journalists from harm through the use of political asylum in the United States, an upcoming International Human Rights Commission hearing on the femicides of Ciudad Juárez, an international debate over the fate of a French citizen sentenced to 60 years in Mexican prison, and NGO condemnations of the murder of two indigenous rights activists in Guerrero.

LAW AND ORDER

DRUG WAR VIOLENCE

Violence continues as new trouble states emerge

Mexico City daily newspaper *Reforma's* running tally of cartel-related killings, or *ejecuciones*, shows continued high rates of violence nationwide, though the numbers show a shifting landscape, with the states of Durango and Guerrero eclipsing Sinaloa and Baja California. These latter two together accounted for over a quarter of *ejecuciones* nationwide in 2008. As of March 13, Durango had racked up

141 *ejecuciones*, more than half its total for last year, while Guerrero had 108. Baja California and Sinaloa, by contrast, had 73 and 86 respectively.

Since the last reporting period, cartel-related killings or *ejecuciones* are up slightly nationwide, averaging nearly 128 per week as of March 13, as compared to 123 four weeks prior. However, the weekly rate of *ejecuciones* in the violence-plagued state of Chihuahua dropped nearly 10 percent during the same period to 43.7, down from 48.7 a month ago. This drop coincides with the recent deployment of thousands of soldiers and federal police to the troubled border city of Ciudad Juárez.

The Mexican military and police continue to engage drug gangs throughout the country. Armed confrontations broke out between presumed drug gangs and police and soldiers over the past month in the states of Tamaulipas, Durango, Guerrero, and Guanajuato. Before the Feb. 17 confrontation in Reynosa, Tamaulipas had enjoyed months of relative quiet. In Guanajuato, police were attacked with grenades while investigating a suspected kidnapping gang. In Zihuatanejo, Guerrero, an attack on a police vehicle with grenades and assault rifles in late February resulted in the charred bodies of the four officers inside. Grenade attacks have also been prominent in the town of Uruapán, Michoacán, where the municipal police station has been targeted three times since mid-February. Also in Michoacán, the PRI mayor of Vista Hermosa was gunned down late February as he arrived at his home. The assassination came eight months after the murder of another PRI mayor in Villa Madero, also in Michoacán.

Federal police and military soldiers arrested Vicente “El Vicentillo” Zambada, the son of alleged Sinaloa cartel leader Ismael Zambada, along with five other suspects in Mexico City on March 18. The suspects were detained in possession of three AR-15 rifles, three .38 pistols, three cars, and \$5,000 (USD) in dollars and pesos. Vicente Zambada was allegedly placed in charge of the cartel’s security operations, after the arrest of Alfredo Beltran Leyva in early 2008 (prior to the Beltran Leyva faction split from the Sinaloa cartel). Ismael Zambada’s brother Jesus, who controlled the cartel’s airport smuggling operations for cocaine and methamphetamine pre-cursor chemicals, was arrested in Mexico City in October 2008.

In Baja California, which has been relatively quiet in recent weeks (compared to the final months of 2008), federal police struck a blow to Teodoro García Simental or “El Teo,” suspected of representing the Sinaloa cartel’s interests in Tijuana in apprehending one of his top operatives, ex-municipal police officer Jesús Alfonso Traperó Ibarra. Another blow came in early March when Ángel Jácome Gamboa, suspected chief hitman of El Teo’s, was captured at a “narcofiesta” in Tijuana. Over 50 others were also detained, including some ministerial, state, and municipal police officers.

In Cancún, where last month the Army general recently put in charge of organized crime fighting efforts in the city was gunned down by a presumed Zeta operative (possibly aided by information from municipal police), 500 federal police officers raided the prison, either in search of contraband or to transfer a high-profile prisoner, depending on the source. The raid resulted in shots fired, tear gas deployed, and a group of prisoners briefly occupying a wing of the prison before police regained control. This was another in a series of incidents highlighting the tenuous security situation in many of the nation’s state prisons, including a prison riot in Ciudad Juárez in early March (see below).

Amidst security challenges nationwide, the state of Chihuahua, and Ciudad Juárez in particular, has since spring of last year proven elusive to Pres. Calderón’s strategy of order through the deployment of force. The state, which saw more than 1600 *ejecuciones* last year, has already in 2009 reached 437 killings as the Sinaloa and Juárez cartels battle for the lucrative Ciudad Juárez-El Paso smuggling corridor. The deployment of over 2000 soldiers and federal police in March of last year had no measurable effect on violence in the city, and it remains to be seen if the recent surge (now totaling over 10,000 statewide) will bring the requisite order for implementing necessary police and justice sector reforms.

SOURCES:

- “Se enfrentan narcos al Ejército en Tamaulipas; entre 5 y 7 muertos.” *Milenio* Feb. 17, 2009.
Rivera Millán, Rafael. “Asesinan a alcalde en Michoacán.” *El Universal* Feb. 24, 2009.
Pavón, A. Olivier. “Capturan a lugarteniente del “Teo” en Tijuana.” *La Crónica de Hoy* Mar. 2, 2009.
“Nuevo Ataque con granada en Uruapan.” *Cambio de Michoacán* Mar. 2, 2009.
“Enfrentamiento en la cárcel de Cancún.” *El Diario de Yucatán* Mar. 7, 2009.

MILITARIZATION

Over 5000 soldiers sent to patrol Ciudad Juárez

Pres. Calderón authorized the deployment of over 5000 soldiers to the border city of Ciudad Juárez with the goal of putting an end to the violence and lawlessness that has carried over into 2009. The first deployment of 1800 soldiers reached the city on Feb. 28 and the remainder have arrived in shifts since. The soldiers joined over 2000 who were deployed to the city in March of last year when violence perpetrated by the warring Sinaloa and Juárez cartels began to escalate. According to *Reforma*, the state of Chihuahua suffered over 1600 cartel-related slayings, or *ejecuciones* in 2008, and has seen over 400 in the first ten weeks of 2009. According to *La Jornada*, the total number of soldiers and federal police operating statewide has reached 10,800.

The decision to send the reinforcements immediately followed the assassination of a bodyguard of Chihuahua Gov. José Reyes Baeza. The governor's convoy was ambushed as it passed through an intersection in the capital city of Chihuahua. Another of Reyes Baeza's bodyguards was wounded in the attack. The suspected assassin, an ex-soldier, was apprehended at the scene after being wounded in the confrontation. According to state Attorney General Patricia González Rodríguez, it was a targeted attack on the governor's team of bodyguards, all state police officers.

Before the military reinforcements arrived, the state was averaging nearly seven *ejecuciones* a day. By some accounts, the violence in Ciudad Juárez has diminished since the arrival of the reinforcements; however, on the same day that the second wave of over 2000 soldiers arrived, at least seven bodies and an unnamed police officer's badge were discovered in a shallow "narco-grave" in the outskirts of the city. Moreover, killings could potentially be underreported with the stepped-up military campaign. In the past, local journalists have reported intimidation and unauthorized detention and confiscation of equipment at the hands of military personnel while attempting to report on organized crime activity. Several Chihuahua media outlets, including respected daily *El Diario*, have recently announced scaled-back organized crime and drug trafficking reporting out of concern for their reporters' safety.

The deployments underscore the "*mano dura*," or "firm hand" approach that Pres. Calderón has taken in his drug control policy since taking office late 2006. They also come at a time when some in Mexico and the United States caution that the Mexican government has lost control of parts of its territory to the vast influence of the drug cartels, particularly in troubled states such as Chihuahua, Durango, Guerrero, and Sinaloa.

SOURCES:

"Fue agresión muy grave y directa vs la escolta del gobernador: procuradora." *El Diario* Feb. 24, 2009.
Villalpando, Rubén. "Llegan a Juárez 5 mil militares más; 8,500 reforzarán la seguridad: Torres Valadez." *La Jornada* Mar. 14, 2009.

Ciudad Juárez police chief resigns under cartel pressure; military takes over

Recent turmoil among Juárez's police ranks has led to a widespread militarization of the city's public security forces, including the Public Security Secretary and the subordinate director of operations, individual police stations, and special forces units.

Ciudad Juárez police chief Roberto Orduña announced his resignation late February, citing as his reason a threat from a criminal group claiming it would assassinate a police officer every 48 hours until he did so. His resignation came hours after a municipal police officer and a prison guard were murdered, presumably by drug gangs. The bodies were found with messages announcing the threat to kill more officers if Orduña did not resign. The police officer was the fifth to be gunned down over the course of a week. Orduña is an ex-military officer who was assigned to the post of director of Public Security last May

after the previous police chief resigned and fled to El Paso after a string of assassinations, including his director of operations Sacramento Pérez and two bodyguards that February.

On March 16, Juárez mayor José Ruiz announced that he would appoint several retired and active members of the military to high security posts. Retired Gen. Julián David Rivera Bretón is the new Secretary of Public Security replacing Orduña. Rivera Bretón has headed several of Mexico's military zones, including the 4th in Sonora, the 9th in Hidalgo, the 19th in Veracruz, and the 42nd in Hidalgo de Parral. Infantry Colonel Alfonso Cristóbal García Melgar has been assigned director of operations to replace Pérez. Military officers have been named commanders for each of the city's police stations, as well as to head the special-forces unit, the so-called Delta Group, and the Rapid Response Center. Yet to be named are the head of Transit Police and the municipal jail.

In the framework of what Juárez daily *El Diario* has called a "new experiment" for the country in militarizing leadership positions of a city's entire police force, and during what is hoped will be a sustained calm in the city resulting from the presence of thousands of soldiers and federal police, the Office of Public Security will soon reactivate its recruitment process. For months recruitment of new cadets has been frozen due to a "cleaning" process underway to expunge the ranks of corrupt officers, as well as unrelenting kidnapping, torture, and killing of police officers. The Calderón administration has stressed since the beginning of its aggressive campaign against the drug cartels that the use of the military in a public security capacity is a temporary measure meant to create space to properly reform the nation's police forces, particularly at the municipal level.

SOURCES:

Verdugo, Eduardo. "México: Renuncia jefe policial tras amenazas del crimen." *Houston Chronicle* Feb. 26, 2009.
"Dirigirá militar Policía de Juárez – Edil." *Reforma* Feb. 27, 2009.
"Otro experimento en Juárez." *El Diario* Mar. 15, 2009.
"Designan a militares al frente de seguridad en Ciudad Juárez." *La Jornada* Mar. 16, 2009.

Mass-execution in Juárez prison leads to military takeover

Twenty-one prisoners at the Chihuahua state penitentiary outside Ciudad Juárez were killed and at least seven more wounded in early March in what officials have described as targeted attacks on members of two drug gangs linked to Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán's Sinaloa cartel. The riot broke out the same day that Juárez mayor José Reyes traveled to Mexico City to discuss with federal authorities the incorporation of military officers into the city's Public Security command. The prison violence broke a several-day period of reportedly relative calm following the recent arrival of thousands of additional soldiers and federal police to the area.

According to a state government spokesman, the confrontation in the prison began just before 6:30 a.m. on March 4 and ended at 10:30, during which time members of the Los Aztecas band, linked to the Carrillo Fuentes' Juárez cartel, subdued prison guards and carried out the massacre of nearly two dozen members of the Los Artistas Asesinos and Los Mexicles bands, both linked to the Sinaloa Cartel. Óscar Hermosillo, director of the prison, said that members of Los Aztecas took keys from a guard giving them access to the maximum-security wing of the prison where they carried out their attacks using improvised weapons. Soldiers and federal police later descended on the prison, some from helicopters, to secure the facilities. Family members of the over 1000 prisoners gathered outside the prison when word spread of the violence, demanding information. At 1:00 p.m., prison personnel announced to the crowd the names of the dead.

Along with the state prison, the Army also assumed control of Juárez' municipal correctional facility, considered one of the most dangerous in the country because of the same inter-gang tensions that erupted in the state facility. Juárez mayor José Reyes said that the militarization of public law enforcement facilities, including the municipal police department, is a step toward eliminating corruption within the ranks.

SOURCE:

Cano, Luis Carlos. "Masacre en penal de Juárez: 20 ejecutados." *El Universal* Mar. 5, 2009.

POLICE REFORM

Terms defined for municipal police improvement fund

In 2008, a special fund – the Subsidy for Municipal Public Security (Subsidio para la Seguridad Pública Municipal, SUBSEMUN) – was created by the federal government (under budget line #36) to supplement local expenditures on police professionalization, equipment, and infrastructure. SUBSEMUN is administered by the Secretary of Public Security (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública, SSP), and provides substantial new resources targeted toward the improvement of local public security agencies. At the outset of 2008, SUBSEMUN allocated over \$3.5 billion pesos, or \$329 million dollars, to 150 local governments. In 2009, the total funding for SUBSEMUN was increased to \$4.1 billion pesos, though due to a severe devaluation of the peso this amounted to only \$290 million dollars. In all, 206 municipalities will receive funding nationwide in 2009, 56 more than in 2008.

The funds come with requirements for the police stations established by the SSP. For one, the municipal police forces receiving funds, all of which range from \$10-\$90 million pesos, will be required to develop a functional and hierarchical structure similar to that of the Federal Preventive Police (PFP). This will entail clearly demarcating the functions of investigation, prevention, and response, as well as establishing a hierarchy of 13 officer ranks to be determined by professional development. More specifically, the model demarcates 35 officer functions, which will be divided among the officer ranks. The terms also dictate that the funds must be used in part to improve officers' salaries as well as to upgrade police facilities.

The 206 municipalities included in the spending are the most populated in the country, and account for the highest crime rates. They also comprise nearly 64 percent of the national population. Mexico State has the most municipalities receiving funding with 19, followed by the Federal District and Veracruz, each with 15.

SOURCES:

Ortiz, Francisco. "Difunden reglas del Subsemun 2009." *Reforma* Jan. 30, 2009.
de la Luz González, María. "SSP impulsa carrera policial en municipios." *El Universal* Mar. 16 2009.
<http://www.presidencia.gob.mx/programas/?contenido=35024> (Accessed Mar. 17, 2009).

U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

Calderón, U.S. officials, media in a tug-of-war over image of Mexico's anti-narcotics campaign

Since cartel-related killings more than doubled in 2008 over the previous year totaling over 5000, violence in Mexico stemming from drug trafficking and organized crime has at long last established itself as a daily focal point among major U.S. media outlets, lawmakers, and government officials. While Pres. Calderón has since the onset of his presidency called for increased U.S. attention to the shared problem of drug trafficking, the recent increased coverage has not manifested itself quite as he might have liked, and is proving to have real implications for future U.S.-Mexico relations.

The Calderón administration has long stressed the importance of mitigating U.S.-side demand for illegal drugs and reducing or eliminating the southbound flow of weapons, which U.S. officials concede account for more than 90 percent of weapons confiscated in Mexico. While around 50 U.S. lawmakers last month appealed to Pres. Obama to reactivate a law banning imports of assault weapons into the United States and the issue of weapons trafficking has received some coverage in U.S. press, the majority of political speak and press coverage has focused on whether the Calderón administration is "winning" in its struggle against the drug cartels, and attempting to assess the threat of "spillover violence" to the United States from troubled border cities such as Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana. Some analyses go so far as to suggest that Mexico may be on its way to becoming a "failed state," possibly in response to a recent statement by the U.S. Joint Forces Command that Mexico, along with Pakistan, is at risk of a sudden collapse and that the United States must be prepared to deal with the national security and humanitarian implications of such a situation.

While most analysts agree that such fears of a collapse of Mexico's central government are grossly exaggerated, potential U.S. government response to the perceived national security threat is real. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates expressed a need and readiness for the United States to step up its support for the Mexican military in the form of counterinsurgency training, a prospect that makes many Mexicans uneasy in the wake of similar measures taken in Colombia in the 1990s. During early discussions of the Merida Initiative – the three-year, \$1.4 billion dollar package to aid Mexico and Central America in battling the drug trade and now included in the omnibus spending bill – the Calderón administration was careful to downplay any role the U.S. military might have in Mexico's anti-narcotics operations. Moreover, the Zetas, the enforcement wing of the Gulf Cartel, were founded by former-members of the Mexican Army's special forces, some of whom were U.S.-trained.

In response to "spillover" concerns among lawmakers and some governors of border-states, the Obama administration announced the possibility of deploying National Guard troops to patrol the border. An administration official speaking on the condition of anonymity told the Associated Press that additional federal agents will be sent to the border region – 37 from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to combat drug running operations and 90 from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency to bolster border security. According to an anonymous administration official, U.S. immigration officials are considering asking Congress to divert millions in funding for workplace enforcement to border security measures. Homeland Security has denied these claims. Meanwhile, experts provided testimony at committee hearings in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to try to inform legislators about the heightened violence in Mexico and the border region.

While reports of U.S.-side violence related to Mexican drug cartels have peppered the news in recent months, evidence of such activity appears to be entirely anecdotal and largely unqualified. Phoenix is commonly held up as an example of "spillover" violence due to numerous reports in the national press that it has become the U.S. capital of "kidnappings for ransom." However, Laura Carlson, director of the Americas Program of the Center for International Policy, points out that absent from such reports are details as to sources for Phoenix's ranking or the methodology behind it. The statements originate from local law enforcement officials, and are often published by the press at face value. Moreover, Claudine LoMonaco, who covers the beat for Arizona Public Media, says that the majority of Phoenix's kidnapping victims have been undocumented migrants abducted by their own smugglers in order to extort more money from their families.

Recent developments in Mexico have also led to a U.S. State Department advisory to U.S. citizens warning of the dangers of travel in the country. The warning was picked up by colleges and universities, which advised their students to avoid traveling to Mexico for spring break. The advisories came as part of a more widespread U.S. perception of a disintegrating security situation in Mexico, which drew an immediate and harsh response from Pres. Calderón, who stepped up his criticism of U.S. politicians for ignoring the problem of U.S.-side demand, arms smuggling into Mexico, and corruption allowing drug trafficking to operate freely in the United States. To critics who claim that the Mexican government has lost control of vast swaths of the country to drug cartels, he challenged them to tell him where those places are, and he'll take them there.

Pres. Obama, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano all plan to visit Mexico in April where they will discuss Mexico's security situation with the Calderón administration and the two nations' shared interests and responsibilities. One item surely to be on the table will be the Merida Initiative, for which U.S. Congress has reportedly approved \$300 million dollars for 2009, \$150 million less than was promised last year by the Bush administration.

SOURCES:

- "Obligado, apoyar más a México: Defensa de EU." *Milenio* Mar. 2, 2009.
Carlson, Laura. "Drug War Doublespeak." *Americas Program* Mar. 9, 2009. <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/5935>
García, Ariadna. "Críticas de EU son irresponsables. – FCH." *Reforma* Mar. 11, 2009.
Sullivan, Eileen and Devlin Barrett. "More feds headed to border to quell drug violence." *Associated Press* Mar. 18, 2009.
Barrett, Devlin and Eileen Sullivan. "Obama wants to shift money, resources to SW border." *Associated Press* Mar. 18, 2009.
"Estados Unidos recorta presupuesto de Iniciativa Mérida." *El Informador* Mar. 18, 2009.

U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

Feds round up over 50 suspected cartel members as part of a 21-month operation

Federal agents in late February rounded up over 50 individuals suspected of involvement in a U.S.-based network serving the Sinaloa cartel. The arrests came as part of the 21-month old Operation Xcellerator, in which over 700 suspects had already been arrested. The roundup, carried out by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and state and local police, included arrests in California, Minnesota, and the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C.

Throughout the 21-month operation, officials have also seized \$59 million dollars, 12 tons of cocaine, 16 tons of marijuana, along with numerous vehicles, airplanes, and boats, according to the DEA. Operation Xcellerator began shortly after the culmination of Operation Imperial Emperor, an investigation resulting in the indictment of Victor Emilio Cazarez-Salazar, believed to be a high-ranking operative within the Sinaloa cartel. Cazarez-Salazar remains a fugitive.

SOURCES:

"Hundreds of Alleged Sinaloa Cartel Members and Associates Arrested in Nationwide Takedown of Mexican Drug Traffickers." *Drug Enforcement Agency Press Release*. Feb. 25, 2009.
Barrett, Devlin. "Sweeping arrests target Mexican drug cartels." *Associated Press* Feb. 25, 2009.

U.S. border inspectors seize nearly \$3 million in bulk cash from southbound bus

A shipment of nearly \$3 million in bulk cash was seized in a routine operation by U.S. authorities from a bus bound for Mexico via the Lincoln-Juarez port of entry in Laredo, Texas.

The nearly \$3 million was discovered on March 19 after the driver of a commercial bus and all passengers officially declared that they did not possess firearms, ammunition, or more than \$10,000 in monetary instruments. Inspection by Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents, a canine unit, and an x-ray scan of the bus revealed 75 tape-wrapped bundles containing \$2,997,510 in U.S. currency inside a hidden compartment located under the passenger seats.

While it is not illegal to possess monetary instruments in amounts exceeding \$10,000, failure to declare possession of cash in excess of that quantity upon entry or exit at U.S. ports of entry is a violation of the USA PATRIOT Act, and may result in arrest and/or confiscation of the currency. The case remains under investigation by CBP and the currency may be returned once a petitioner has demonstrated that its source and intended use was legitimate.

Drug trafficking organizations frequently smuggle bulk cash into Mexico as a means of evading the detection of drug profits in the United States. U.S. law establishes strict reporting requirements for monetary instruments in the United States [§ 31 U.S.C. 5316]. Beginning in 2005, CBP and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) launched a joint-operation titled "Operation Firewall," which has resulted in the arrest of more than 260 people and seizures of more than \$115 million in monetary instruments from 2005 to early 2008.

SOURCES:

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/newsroom/news_releases/03202009_5.xml
<http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/opfirewall.htm>

Arizona man to face trial for knowingly supplying firearms to Mexican drug cartels

Jury selection began on March 3 for an Arizona man charged with knowingly selling at least 650 firearms to Mexican drug cartels. George Iknadosian, 47, is the owner of X-Caliber Guns in north Phoenix, to which several weapons confiscated in Mexico have reportedly been traced. One of the firearms, a pistol, was recovered in January 2008 during the arrest of Alfredo Beltrán Leyva, a top lieutenant of Joaquin "El

Chapo” Guzmán, leader of the Sinaloa cartel. The trial is the culmination of an extensive investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and state authorities. Iknadosian will face charges of fraud, conspiracy, and criminal association. He also reportedly sold weapons to undercover agents who told him the weapons would be resold in Mexico. He denies the charges.

Iknadosian is accused of selling firearms to “straw buyers,” individuals paid by drug cartels to act as third parties in the purchase of guns from gun stores and gun shows, principally in the states of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, all of which have relatively relaxed gun laws. Mexico, by contrast, has extremely stringent gun laws. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, straw buyers are paid around \$100 dollars per firearm. Federal investigators have signaled that more than 90 percent of guns confiscated in Mexico can be traced back to U.S. sellers.

SOURCES:

“Inicia juicio contra comerciante de armas a cártel de Sinaloa.” *El Universal* Mar. 3, 2009.
Gaynor, Tim. “U.S. gun dealer trial begins in Arizona.” *Reuters* Mar. 3, 2009.

INTERNATIONAL DRUG POLICY

United Nations summit exposes rift in international drug control philosophies

Member states voted to continue the “war on drugs” policy for another ten years at the United Nations Commission for Narcotic Drugs (CND) convention in March. While this was the prevailing view, some dissenting European delegates criticized the model for its lack of attention to harm reduction strategies, arguing that the war on drugs has led to vastly more powerful drug cartels and has contributed to the spread of HIV.

Such harm reduction strategies include programs like needle exchanges for intravenous drug users, safe drug consumption rooms, and needle distribution in prisons. Countries opposed to such measures, including the United States, Russia, China, Japan, and Italy, said that they legitimize drug use and undermine law enforcement efforts.

Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), acknowledged that law and order anti-narcotics efforts have had the unintended consequence of strengthening organized crime syndicates, and warned that the growth of organized crime has begun to undermine the stability of a number of smaller countries. These points were driven home this past month with the controversial inclusion of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, leader of Mexico’s Sinaloa cartel, at #701 in Forbes’ list of billionaires worldwide. Mexican Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora immediately lashed out at the publication, calling the inclusion of Guzmán irresponsible in glorifying his criminal activities, and calling Forbes’ methods for determining Guzmán’s wealth dubious.

Regardless of the propriety of Forbes inserting El Chapo between the likes of a Swiss oil tycoon and an American heir to the Campbell Soup fortune, the wealth and influence wielded by the cartels in Mexico is undeniable, if difficult to quantify. Assistant Secretary of the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs David Johnson told members of the House Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs on March 10 that his office estimates that 450,000 people are involved in Mexico’s drug trade, which generates between \$13-\$25 billion a year. Johnson did not specify the methodology behind these numbers in his presentation, meant to stress the importance of fully funding the Merida Initiative. Along with supplying Mexican law enforcement agencies with surveillance equipment, training, and information technology, the Merida Initiative has a demand reduction component, with counseling and treatment services for addicts in Mexico.

A group of academics and former leaders from throughout Latin America released a report earlier this year that concludes that prohibitionist policies enacted throughout the region for years have not yielded the desired results, and urges a paradigm shift toward “safer, more efficient and humane drug policies” espoused by European Union member states. The group includes Ernesto Zedillo, former president of

Mexico; César Gaviria, former president of Colombia; and Mario Vargas Llosa, renowned Peruvian writer and once presidential candidate; among others.

The Obama administration has shown some early signs of a potential shift in drug control policy. Aside from thus far avoiding the term “war on drugs,” Pres. Obama has nominated former Seattle police chief Gil Kerlikowske to the post of “drug czar” at the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Under Kerlikowske, Seattle citizens voted to decriminalize marijuana for medical purposes, and to make minor marijuana possessions the lowest priority for police. He has also condoned needle exchange programs in the city as well as drug court, which offers low-level offenders alternatives to serving jail time. Since his nomination, he has spoken of the need to address the drug problem in the United States as first and foremost a public health issue and to manage resources accordingly.

SOURCES:

“Drugs and Democracy: Toward a Paradigm Shift.” *Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy.*
Johnson, David T. “The Merida Initiative.” Address to the House Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, Related Programs
Mar. 10, 2009. <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/rm/120225.htm>.
Bell, Bethany. “UN debates drug policy’s impact.” *BBC News* Mar. 12, 2009.
“New Drug Czar Gil Kerlikowske brings Northwest lessons.” Editorial. *The Seattle Times* Mar. 12, 2009.

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY

“Irregularities” found in Calderon’s 2007 budget

A review of Mexico’s 2007 budget, which is the first year of the government of President Felipe Calderón, found irregularities of about 60 billion pesos, almost double the amount of irregularities identified during the last year of the previous presidential administration of Vicente Fox. Approximately 31 percent of the irregularities of Calderon’s budget in his first year had to do with appropriations to cities, states and the government of the Federal District, according to the findings of an auditing branch of the Mexican government called the *Auditoria Superior de la Federacion*. A significant portion of the irregularities comes from money being transferred to special trusts called *fideicomisos* that aren’t as subject to open records, said auditor Arturo Gonzalez de Aragon, who was quoted in *La Jornada*. Gonzalez noted that the government is doling out responsibilities through concessions, permits and licenses - and that these aren’t being properly regulated.

SOURCES:

Mendez, Enrique and Garduno, Roberto. “Irregularidades por \$60 mil millones en la Cuenta Publica 2007, detecta la ASF.” *La Jornada*. Mar. 13, 2009.

Bloggers bring attention to wasteful spending by the Mexican government

Global Voices, a blog aggregator of what people are saying around the world about country-specific issues, notes that bloggers in Mexico have been scrutinizing updated information on the government’s transparency website that includes details on how money is being spent by a range of public institutions.

As a result, bloggers have been identifying certain examples of what they perceive to be wasteful spending on government activities. One blog called *Taller de Musica Popular El Cantaro*, for example, posted ten examples from the government’s web site as examples of wasteful spending. Global Voices notes that the entry has been reposted on other blogs throughout Mexico. A web site called *Gastoinutil* (gastoinutil.com) – or Useless Spending – is also trying to encourage residents to share their findings of allegedly wasteful government spending. It is billed as a “project to help the Mexican president identify wasteful spending” but the site doesn’t explain if it is operating independently or in conjunction with the Mexican government. It has also started a Twitter account to encourage more citizens to provide tips of wasteful spending.

SOURCES:

Global Voices post from Feb. 27, 2009: <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/02/27/mexico-criticizing-wasteful-government-spending/>

Federal officers arrested in Yucatan for extortion

Mexican authorities arrested 25 federal police officers in Yucatan in connection with the extortion of a local businessman. The officers were charged with extortion, abuse of authority and association with criminals, according to the Mexican Attorney General's office. The detention stems from an incident in which officers raided a nightclub owned by a Merida businessman. The officers alleged they had found drugs in the building and then offered to drop the matter if the club owner provided them with about \$6,519 dollars. The club owner provided a portion of the money, and then the officers arranged to collect the remainder of the money the next day under threats of closing the club if the money didn't materialize. Instead, the club owner contacted local authorities who found the officers as they were apparently dividing up the bribe money.

SOURCES:

No author. "25 Mexican cops arrested for extortion." *Latin American Herald Tribune*. Mar., 2009.
Madrid, Lemic. "Atrapan a 25 federales acusados de extorsion." *Excelsior*. Mar. 4, 2009.

TRANSPARENCY**Documents sought from CISEN through public records**

Mexico's agency that oversees access to public information has ordered the *Centro de Investigacion y Seguridad Nacional (CISEN)* to provide documents that back up statements allegedly made by the director of the organization that drug trafficking money has been involved in the campaigns of some legislatures.

The CISEN director, Guillermo Valdes Castellanos, has argued that there is no specific document that provides the foundation for the supposed declarations, which he claims were taken out of context in a discussion of a hypothetical situation. Valdes Castellanos, who oversees the secret-service type agency, has said he was only echoing statements made in the past by different public sectors. The statements were made on July 14 and were published in the *Financial Times*.

The decision by Mexico's public information agency was determined by unanimous vote by its five commissioners on the basis that CISEN should provide details on the possible infiltration of drug money in Mexican institutions if that is indeed the case. CISEN is a civil entity controlled by the office of the Minister of the Interior, and its mission is to generate intelligence, according to the CISEN website.

SOURCES:

Martinez, Fabiola. "IFAI: debe el Cisen informar por que su director relaciono narcos con campanas." *La Jornada*. Mar. 15, 2009.

Public record information being sought on salaries of Mexico state's mayors

Reports that mayors in the state of Mexico weren't being honest about how much they are actually earning has prompted an "avalanche" of public information requests to the state's Institute of Transparency and Access to Public Information, according to news reports. The requests range from information on the mayors' salaries to that of other high-ranking public officials, as well as information over their international trips and international calls.

A study by the Mexican Congress apparently prompted many of the requests for additional information. The study determined that of the state's 125 mayors, 93 have salaries that don't correspond with how much they should be making since they falsify information over their actual salaries. This means that as a point of reference they have one salary figure on the Internet portals, another figure that is the recommended salary, and a third total that is the actual salary that is much higher than either of the other markers.

Of the 125 mayors, only the mayor of Papalotla, Julian Mendoza Carpintera, had an actual salary that coincided with what he declared he earned, according to the report. Another 31 mayors declared less than what they actually earn, though it is within the amount recommended they earn. The mayor with the highest salary, which was comparable to that of the state of Mexico's governor, was the mayor of Zinacantepec, who earned as much as \$16,500 in some months.

SOURCES:

Montano, Maria Teresa. "Ordenan abrir datos de municipios mexiquenses." *El Universal*. Mar. 5, 2009.
No author. "En el Estado de Mexico, 93 ediles ganan mas que Pena Nieto." *El Informador*. Mar. 1, 2009.

Study looks at transparency of information on university internet portals

When it comes to transparency online, Mexico's public universities have taken steps to increase the amount of information provided on their Web sites about budgets and staff salaries - but they still have room to improve, according to a study by the consulting agency aregional.com.

The agency came to this conclusion after analyzing the information available on university Web pages. The average score of the universities was 68.5 on a scale of 0 to 100. Last year, the average was 58.7. This was the second year the agency did the assessment of 38 university Web sites in which they checked to see what kind of information was available online about finances, academics, and administration. Some of the details assessed included whether the sites included how much federal and state funding is received by the universities, results of audits, and the salaries of academic personnel.

Among the universities that scored highest for transparency online included the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, the Universidad de Guadalajara, and the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, the Colegio de México, the UNAM, and the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California. The universities that scored the lowest were: the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, the Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila and the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.

The researchers said that one major absence in accountability is the information regarding university unions. Unions are protected by laws from disclosing public information on how they use their funds, according to *Excelsior*. The researchers also found that though the amount of money per capita spent by Mexico's public universities is greater than that of comparable countries such as Brazil and Chile, Mexico scores lower in academic results.

SOURCES:

Alcantara, Liliana. "Repueban 13 universidades en material de transparencia." *El Universal*. Mar. 4, 2009.
Figueroa, Hector. "Universidades estatales superan a UAM y Poli en transparencia." *Excelsior*. Mar. 4, 2009.

President's health records are considered private and confidential

Mexico's public information agency has determined that the health records of Mexican President Felipe Calderón should be considered confidential information. The five commissioners voted unanimously that this information is considered personal data – not public data. The case was reviewed after a citizen filed a public records request for Calderón's health records in December, 2008. The citizen requested the records in relation to an incident in 2008 in which Calderón fell off his bicycle and injured his shoulder.

SOURCE:

"Confirma IFAI confidencialidad del expediente medico de Calderon." *El Financiero*. Mar. 11, 2009.

POLICE CORRUPTION

Federal assessments of Mexico's municipal police continue

A government study has determined that more than half of Mexico's municipal police aren't qualified to do their job. The study was published by the *Auditoria Superior de la Federación*, which is part of the Congressional branch.

The study found that one in five police officers have less than a basic education. In addition, the study noted that on average, each officer is overweight by ten kilograms, and that 14 percent showed some indications of psychological problems. The study also found that the nationwide evaluations are taking too long with only a third of the municipal agents having been tested so far, a delay that signifies it would take two more years to test the entire nation's municipal police force.

The country's police force is challenged with low budgets, a lack of resources, and not enough weapons, according to the study. Interestingly, more police assigned to cities doesn't always mean less crime. The study found that in areas where the number of municipal police for each 100,000 habitants is higher than the national average, the crime rate tends to be higher.

SOURCE:

No author. "Mas del 50% de policiaos mexicanos no son aptos para su trabajo: ASF." *EFE via El Informador*. Mar. 13, 2009.

More than 100 police in a Mexico State municipality are ousted

A total of 108 police officers with the Tlalnepantla municipal police force in Mexico State, were removed from their posts and their names entered in a computer database called Mexico Platform that is intended to prevent them from being hired in other police forces. The mayor of the municipality said the actions were based on results from federal exams conducted by the Secretary of Public Security and they represent a significant number of the city's police force. The mayor was seeking the help of the federal preventive police and other law enforcement branches to assist in patrolling the area.

SOURCE:

Nieto, Martha. "Tlalnepantla arroja a la calle a 100 policiaos por corruptos." *Excelsior*. Feb. 25, 2009.

Study on Police Abuse in Latin America

A study by the Latin American Public Opinion Project has found that 5 percent of Mexicans surveyed reported being abused by a police officer over the past year.

The study looked at overall abuse reports, as well as reports of abuse that take into account individual characteristics of the countries, such as overall wealth, education and age. When considering these other factors, El Salvador was the country with the highest level of reported abuse, with 8.2 percent, followed by Argentina, Bolivia, Columbia, Peru, Brazil and Mexico. A total of 32,853 people participated in the survey in 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Referring to the overall data across countries, the study reports that people who are victims of corruption and crime are more likely to be victimized by the police. The study considers two explanations for this. One is that "people victimized by crime or corruption tend to get in contact with police more frequently than the rest of citizens...and this relationship exposes them to more mistreatment than the average citizen." The second explanation is that "some of the reported corruption and crime victimization might actually be perpetrated by the police."

SOURCE:

Cruz, Jose. "Police Abuse in Latin America." *AmericasBarometer Insights: 2009* (No. 11). Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University.

MILITARY CORRUPTION

A dozen soldiers arrested in Aguascalientes

Mexican authorities arrested twelve soldiers suspected of working with drug traffickers in the Mexican state of Aguascalientes. Mexican army officials said the soldiers are suspected of providing protection to members of the Gulf cartel and that they were collaborating with four municipal police officers. The Gulf Cartel is battling the so-called Sinaloa federation, which is allegedly headed by suspected trafficker Joaquin Guzman. The Gulf Cartel has a history of recruiting or working with military officers. They have been working with a group of rogue former soldiers called the Zetas, known for their brutality and expertise in torture.

SOURCE:

Rosenberg, Mica. "Mexican soldiers arrested for alleged drug ties." *Reuters*. Mar. 7, 2009.
Velediaz, Juan and Medellin, Jorge. "Militares arraigados, con 2 anos de servicio." *El Universal*. Mar. 6, 2009.

U.S. BORDER CORRUPTION

Two former U.S. Border Patrol agents are extradited to the United States to face bribery charges

Mexican authorities extradited to the United States two former U.S. Border Patrol agents who are accused of smuggling Brazilians into the United States. Raul Villarreal and his brother Fidel had been hiding out in Mexico for almost two years until they were captured in Tijuana in October, 2008. The Villarreal brothers made their initial court appearance on March 13 in San Diego federal court. They face charges of bribery of a public official, conspiracy to bring illegal aliens for financial gain and witness tampering, according to a story by The Associated Press. The Villarreal brothers are naturalized U.S. citizens from Mexico who grew up in San Diego. The Associated Press reported that uniformed border patrol agents attended the court appearance to show their disapproval of the brothers' alleged actions. Raul Villarreal, in particular, was a recognizable figure from working as an agency spokesman.

SOURCES:

Marosi, Richard. "Former Border Patrol agents arrested after 2 years on the run." *Los Angeles Times*. Oct. 21, 2008.
Spagat, Elliot. "Former Border Agents Face Smuggling Charges." *Associated Press* story in the *San Jose Mercury News*. Mar. 13, 2009.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer sentenced for smuggling people, drugs

Former U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer Luis Francisco Alarid was sentenced in February to seven years in prison for conspiring to smuggle marijuana and illegal immigrants from Mexico into the United States. The San Diego Union-Tribune reported that Alarid worked at the Otay Mesa port of entry and that court documents indicated that he let "numerous" cars with drugs or people to enter the country illegally during the seven months he worked for CBP. He pleaded guilty in November after being indicted by a federal grand jury in June, 2008, and he is being forced to give up \$175,000 in cash bribes and other items purchased from his illicit activities, according to the newspaper.

SOURCE:

Moran, Greg. "Former Customs officer gets 7-year sentence." *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. Feb. 20, 2009.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

POLITICAL ASYLUM

Mexican journalists will create an organization to aid members of the news media seeking asylum in the United States

A group of five Mexican journalists have announced plans to create an organization to help threatened members of the news media gain asylum status in the United States. The announcement, made by journalists Emilio Gutiérrez Soto and Jorge Luis Aguirre, came at a workshop hosted by the group Investigative Reporters and Editors at the University of Texas, El Paso. The association will be named Mexican Journalists in Exile ("Periodistas Mexicanos en el Exilio," PME).

Gutiérrez Soto, reporter who had written several articles criticizing the Mexican military for the daily *El Diario del Noroeste* and co-founder of PME, fled to the United States in June, 2008 after he says he was threatened at his home in Ascensión, Chihuahua by what all appearances was a group of soldiers. Gutiérrez Soto was held in a migrant detention center in El Paso from last summer until January of this year when he was allowed to leave. He is currently awaiting a decision from a federal court as to his request for political asylum. For his part, Aguirre, who manages the website La Polaka in Ciudad Juárez, fled to El Paso four months ago on the same day that *El Diario* reporter Armando Rodríguez was shot dead outside his Ciudad Juárez home. he says he received a phone call that day telling him he would be next.

The journalists are joined in their efforts by El Paso immigration attorney Carlos Spector, who told reporters that the group will work to facilitate the political asylum process for foreign journalists, eliminate long detentions in immigration centers and to educate U.S. immigration authorities about the unique problems faced by persecuted journalists.

According to the *L.A. Times*, the number of asylum requests by Mexican nationals doubled in the past fiscal year over the previous year to 200, and is on track to surpass that number this year. Seventy filed petitions in the first quarter of this year, mostly in El Paso and San Diego. Most petitions have come from employed, middle class professionals. The numbers have not been enough to overwhelm U.S. immigration judges, but the increase in asylum seekers from Mexico has forced officials to revisit the framework for asylum in U.S. law. Traditionally, asylum status is reserved for those fleeing civil wars or dictatorships. Many Mexicans seeking asylum reportedly claim that they are fleeing violence from which their government has failed to protect them. Officials are reticent to redefine asylum guidelines fearing potential abuses. According to *NPR*, Mexicans seeking refuge in the United States have one of the highest rates of asylum denial in the world, at 86 percent.

SOURCES:

- "Promoverán asilo político de periodistas mexicanos en EU." *El Diario* Feb. 21, 2009.
"Ante la violencia, fundan Periodistas Mexicanos en el Exilio." *Cimac Noticias* Feb. 26, 2009.
Becker, Andrew and Patrick J. McDonnell. "Mexico's drug war creates new class of refugees." *LA Times* Mar. 4, 2009.
Burnett, John. "Mexican Journalist Asks for Asylum in U.S." *NPR Morning Edition* Mar. 6, 2009.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

International Human Rights Commission to hold a hearing on impunity for Juárez femicides

In early March the citizens' group Ciudadano Observatorio de los Derechos de las Mujeres announced that the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (CIDH) will hold a hearing in April to evaluate the Mexican government's response to the 2001 killing of three women in Ciudad Juárez. Specifically, the government is charged with impunity and a lack of investigation in cases of gender violence. This will be the first time the Mexican government has been brought to trial regarding femicides since the killings began in 1993. Since then, over 400 women have been killed in and around Ciudad Juárez, the vast majority of which cases remain unsolved.

Femicides continue in Ciudad Juárez, with 83 registered in 2008, and 15 so far this year.

The charges, which were brought to the commission by two Mexican attorneys, specifically pertain to the murders of three women of a group of eight who disappeared from a cotton field in Ciudad Juárez in November 2001 and were later found dead. However, the Ciudadano Observatorio de los Derechos de las Mujeres has presented the trial as an accounting for the hundreds of femicides carried out in Ciudad Juárez over the past fifteen years, and the impunity suffered by the families and communities affected. A Spanish attorney will act as assessor to the two Mexican attorneys.

The above-mentioned citizens' group expressed confidence that the trial, which will be held in Santiago, Chile, will yield a verdict obligating the Mexican government to make reparations to the victims' families, not only in the form of monetary payments, but the prosecution and imprisonment of those responsible for what the group characterized as structural impunity, including deliberate manipulation of investigations.

SOURCES:

"México, a juicio en la CIDH por el asesinato de 3 mujeres en Ciudad Juárez." *Proceso* Mar. 10, 2009.

"CIDH alista juicio por 3 feminicidios." *El Universal* Mar. 11, 2009.

Federal District publishes procedures for applying gender violence law

The government of the Federal District (DF) has published the regulations for applying the Law of Access for Women to a Life Free of Violence ("Ley de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida libre de Violencia"). The document describes in 54 articles the rules for applying the seven systems defined by the law: the violence reporting system; inter-institutional coordination, prevention, response, access to justice, means of protection, and emergency houses and refuge centers.

The law seeks to address the issue of violence against women via a prevention model, establishing training courses for personnel of the DF's Public Security Secretariat and the Attorney General's Office to add to their legal framework a perspective of gender and women's rights. Personnel of the DF's Supreme Court will also be incorporated into such training. The rules also stipulate that informative campaigns will consciously refrain from including images and messages that reaffirm notions of gender roles and stereotypes that encourage the subordination of women. Specifically pertaining to the function of response, all agencies will be required to establish a team trained according to the requirements of the law.

The law also stipulates, consistent with the larger justice sector reforms passed by The Mexican congress a year ago, that in cases of "flagrancy," or when a violent gender crime is clearly being committed – even within a domicile – the police are obligated to intervene, and are not required to first obtain a court order.

SOURCE:

"Publica GDF Reglamento de Ley de Acceso a Vida Libre de Violencia." *Cimac Noticias* Feb. 27, 2009.

FOREIGN NATIONALS IN THE MEXICAN JUSTICE SYSTEM

French citizen sentenced to 60 years for involvement in a Mexican kidnapping ring

Florence Marie Louise Cassez Crepin, a French national, was sentenced to 60 years in a Mexican prison for her involvement in a kidnapping ring after two years of legal proceedings. Specifically, Cassez Crepin was convicted of involvement in organized crime, three counts of kidnapping, and possession of two prohibited firearms. Her case has since become a lightning rod for debate over the legality and possible implications of repatriating her to France to serve out her time there – or possibly not.

During a visit to Mexico, French Pres. Nicolas Sarkozy requested that Cassez Crepin be returned to France to serve out her term there. Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) immediately dismissed the request as contrary to efforts currently being carried out by the Mexican government and people. José Luis Soberanes, president of the CNDH, stressed in a letter to Pres. Calderón that such a move would set an unfortunate precedent that would undermine the essential goal of ending impunity. He added that under current international contracts dictating the terms of international transfer of criminals,

Cassez Crepin's sentence could be substantially reduced or even commuted by judicial or administrative order were she to be moved to France.

Cassez Crepin's attorney has created a bi-national committee to evaluate her case. He argued that her transfer to France to serve out her sentence is entirely consistent with both the Mexican constitution and the treaty signed by both nations concerning such issues.

Several Mexican legislators have come forward to protest the prospect of Cassez' repatriation along the same lines as the CNDH. The president of the senate Gustavo Enrique Madero, however, has expressed a favorable view of repatriation, citing the importance of adhering to international treaties. The Calderón administration has yet to publicly assume a position on the matter.

SOURCES:

Méndez, Alfredo. "Florence Cassez cometió seis delitos, sentenció el juez Rivera." *La Jornada* Mar. 10, 2009.
"Rechaza CNDH petición de trasladar a Cassez a Francia." *La Jornada* Mar. 10, 2009.
"Partidos rechazan traslado de Cassez." *El Universal* Mar. 11, 2009.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights groups condemn killings of two workers in Guerrero

Human rights groups have condemned the killings of two human rights workers in the state of Guerrero who were abducted on Feb. 13. The bodies of Raul Lucas Lucia and Manuel Ponce Rosas were found about a week later showing signs of torture, according to *La Jornada*.

The human rights groups involved in bringing attention to the case include Amnesty International, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Watch, and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. The groups are asking that the Mexican government take over the case from the Guerrero Attorney General's Office due to suspicions the local Ayutla government was involved in the abductions.

The two men worked on behalf of indigenous groups in the state for The Organization for the Future of the Mixtec Community. They assisted the region's indigenous groups and were based out of Ayutla, Guerrero, according to news reports.

Human Rights Watch, in a Feb. 25 letter to Mexican authorities, said that they had received "credible reports" that the two men were kidnapped by members of the ministerial police on February 13, 2009, while participating in a public act in a high school. According to the families' lawyer, several witnesses saw a group of non-uniformed men identify themselves as police and drive the two indigenous rights defenders away in an unmarked car, according to the group's letter. The letter also detailed the signs of torture: "Mr. Lucas Lucía was found with a bullet in his head, with his hands tied in front and with severe bruises and blows to his nose, cheeks and mouth. Severe burns present on Mr. Lucas Lucía's neck and chest areas also suggest that he may have been subject to electric shocks. Similarly, Mr. Ponce Rosas had several bruises in his face and head, his teeth shattered and his hands tied in front. Both bodies were discovered buried in plastic bags."

Amnesty International has said that a pattern of killings, attacks, threats and detentions of human rights workers in Ayutla "has converted the region to be a constant danger for those people who defend the rights of the most marginalized indigenous communities in Mexico," according to *La Jornada*.

SOURCES:

Human Rights Watch letter: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/02/25/letter-state-attorney-general-guerrero-mexico-regarding-killing-human-rights-defende>. Feb. 25, 2009.
Olivares, Alonso and Misael Habana de los Santos. "Condenan CIDH, ONU y AI ejecucion de dos defensores de derechos en Guerrero." *La Jornada*. Mar. 7, 2009.

AROUND THE STATES

Morelos prepares for statewide justice reform implementation by June

Morelos' attorney general Francisco Coronato Rodríguez announced mid-March that oral trials would be implemented in the eastern municipalities of the state by June of this year. Oral trials began in the state capital Cuernavaca in November of last year. The announcement comes despite reported missteps by criminal investigators from the Public Prosecutor's Office in Cuernavaca. Coronato said that the state has learned much from the experiences Chihuahua and Oaxaca, where many of Morelos' legal professionals have gone to receive training.

In preparation for implementation of oral trials in the eastern region of the state, municipal police bosses have been undergoing training to ensure that the judicial process is carried out without errors, particularly in the investigative stage. Of most concern is ensuring that crime scenes are secured to avoid contamination, and that proper guidelines are followed in the apprehension of suspects. A 6-week training sequence was also initiated in mid-March for attorneys in the 5th and 6th eastern districts.

In related news, the state Attorney General's Office evaluated 90 applicants under consideration for 35 investigative openings in the Office of the Public Prosecutor to meet the needs of the new justice system. The applicants underwent ethical, academic, psychological, and drug testing, as well as exams in the areas of law.

SOURCES:

Cuevas Villalobos, Elizabeth. "Capacitan a jefes municipales para abatir errores en los juicios orales." *La Jornada de Morelos* Mar. 6, 2009.

Cuevas Villalobos, Elizabeth. "Se declaran listos para implementar el sistema de juicios orales en el oriente." *La Jornada de Morelos* Mar. 14, 2009.

Sánchez, Martín. "Convoca PGJ a ministerios para los juicios orales." *El Sol de Cuernavaca*. Mar. 15, 2009.

Nuevo León constructs four additional courtrooms for family justice

Gustavo Guerrero Gutiérrez, president of Nuevo León's Supreme Court, announced in early March the construction of four new oral trial courtrooms for family justice, adding to the eight already existing. The courtrooms will be utilized to attend to filings for divorce, alimony, and child custody disputes. Guerrero Gutiérrez added that the additional courtrooms will reduce the annual caseload for each judge to 800 from its current level of 1200.

Guerrero denied claims that the state is substantially backlogged in its handling of family law cases, claiming that the eight existing family law judges have worked through 95 percent of the 10,500 case files presented over the past year.

SOURCES:

"Aumentan salas de juicios orales en Nuevo León." *Vanguardia* Mar. 2, 2009.
Proderecho. www.proderecho.com. Accessed Mar. 19, 2009.

Human trafficking in Oaxaca largely ignored by authorities, according to U.S. aid group

Gabriela Saavedra – director of Proteja, a subsidiary of USAID focusing on the problem of human trafficking – expressed her concern that there are only 24 preliminary inquiries into suspected cases of human trafficking in Oaxaca, a number that she says fails to reflect the reality of a state in which many people are subjected to sexual exploitation and slavery for financial gain. "If these data were true, I would say that in Mexico there doesn't exist the problem of human trafficking, when in reality we are very far from that – there are many unpunished cases," she said.

In an interview with Oaxaca daily *El Imparcial*, Saavedra said that Oaxaca's status as a tourism center with a coast provides a market for human trafficking. She acknowledged that the state government has cooperated with the U.S. organization's efforts to help them address the problem, but added that criminal

networks involved in human trafficking have become deeply entrenched in the state that their illicit activities are often interpreted as customary practices. In most cases, victims of such crimes are not aware that they are victims, she said.

Saavedra expressed hope in the capacity for the justice reforms recently undertaken by Oaxaca to effectively address the problem, particularly in training public officials in human rights law. She added that Proteja is currently offering training seminars in offices of public prosecutors around the state to educate personnel about theoretic and methodological frameworks of national and international human trafficking laws, as well as strategies for identifying and assisting victims.

SOURCE:

Parra Meixueiro, Luis. "Oaxaca no investiga la trata de personas." *El Imparcial* Mar. 12, 2009.

The Federal District to implement new public records Web site

The government of the Federal District is working with information experts at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) to create a Web site that will allow residents to request and immediately obtain certain public information data, such as budget records. Federal District officials told Mexican media that the site, which should be functioning in November, will use a question and answer format so that people can ask for specific information online, such as the budget amount destined for public works projects. The program will process the request and then immediately provide the information. The site will provide options to export the information, and online visitors will also be able to file formal public records requests that may require more time to process, according to Notimex. The site will also be used to file formal public records requests for information that requires additional time to gather.

SOURCE:

No author. "Funcionara en Noviembre Ventanilla Unica de Transparencia en el DF." *Notimex*. Mar. 12, 2009.

Proposing an independent anti-corruption agency in Nuevo Leon

Fernando Elizondo Barragan, who is a pre-candidate for governor in the state of Nuevo Leon, is calling for the creation of a new government agency to combat corruption that would be independent of the governor or the judicial system. Elizondo Barragan, who is with the National Action Party, said that the state needs to try something radical because efforts to combat corruption over the past 15 years have left little noticeable impact. "There has to be a direct approach with new methods because in the last few years there hasn't been any advances in this struggle," he said according to a *Notimex* report. Elizondo Barragan believes that creating an independent agency with the power and willingness to pursue corruption cases would force people to change their attitudes and behavior.

SOURCE:

No author. "Plantea Elizondo Barragan crear organismo anticorrupcion en NL." *Notimex* story in *Milenio*. Mar. 12, 2009.

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.

Summaries for this report were compiled and edited by TBI Research Associates Cory Molzahn and Anna Gearley, with assistance from Judith Davila and Stephanie Borrowdale. Any opinions expressed in attributions for this summary are those expressed in the media reports and op-ed pieces cited, and not those of the Trans-Border Institute or the University of San Diego.

[Copyright Trans-Border Institute, 2009. All rights reserved.](#)