

Forum: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3)

Issue: Eliminating criminal violence in Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

Mexico's crime rate has always been high, evident in official statistics such as the Global Peace Index (GPI) which ranks Mexico among the least peaceful countries in Latin America.¹ As a result, the people have always experienced insecurity and instability, which in return has driven some of them to engage in illegal activities. What Mexico needs is opportunities, not violence.² With crime rates so excessively high and with the prosecutions being so low, the people's morale and trust in the government have been reduced.

Crimes in Mexico do not limit themselves to just pickpocketing and mugging, but also to murder, sex and drug trafficking, assault, rape, extortion and femicide making people feel insecure and unwilling to trust the authorities. Those who are affected by this are mostly young people, with drug use being a harsh reality. Present government facilities to deal with such problems are few so there is a growing trend of informal and illegal treatment centers³.

This study guide aims to explain why this issue is so important and what could be done to combat it. Furthermore, background information on the historical aspects of the issue and how it could be improved will be explained.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Drug Cartel

"Drug cartel, an illicit consortium of independent organizations formed to limit competition and control the production and distribution of illegal drugs. Drug cartels are extremely well-organized, well-financed, efficient, and ruthless. Since the 1980s, they have dominated the international narcotics trade".⁴

¹ Statista Research Department. "Topic: Crime and Violence in Mexico." *Statista*, 2 July 2023, www.statista.com/topics/6576/crime-and-violence-in-mexico/#topicOverview.

² Mercado, Virginia. "Mexico Needs Opportunities, Not Violence | D+C - Development + Cooperation." *D+C - Development + Cooperation*, 3 Dec. 2023, www.dandc.eu/en/article/mexico-had-high-expectations-present-governments-promise-curb-crime-and-improve-security. Accessed 15 July 2024.

³ Ackerman, Daniel, and Meghna Chakrabarti. "Underground Addiction Care in Mexico — and Its Spread to the U.S." *WBUR*, NPR, 29 Apr. 2024, www.wbur.org/onpoint/2024/04/29/underground-addiction-care-mexico-rehab.

⁴ Samuels, Richard J., and The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Drug Cartel | Definition, Impact & History." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 6 May 2016, www.britannica.com/topic/drug-cartel.

Human Trafficking

“Human Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. Men, women and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world. The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims”.⁵

Sinaloa Cartel

“Sinaloa cartel, an international crime organization that is among the most-powerful drug-trafficking syndicates in the world. It is based in Culiacán, Sinaloa state, Mexico. Its origins can be traced to the Guadalajara cartel, which was one of Mexico’s largest crime organizations in the early 1980s.

However, after the cartel was involved in the 1985 torture and murder of a U.S. drug enforcement agent, U.S. and Mexican forces cracked down on the syndicate, and by the end of the decade it had broken into various groups, one of which was based in Sinaloa”.⁶

Femicide

“The killing of a woman by an intimate partner and the death of a woman as a result of a practice that is harmful to women. Intimate partner is understood as a former or current spouse or partner, whether the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim”.⁷

Extortion

“The legal definition of extortion is the use of force, or threat of force, to obtain money or another item of value from another person. Many jurisdictions classify extortion as a “crime against property or a theft-related offense, but the threat of harm to a person is an essential element of the offense.”⁸

Domestic Violence

“Domestic and family violence includes a range of abuse, including economic, physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse towards children, adults, and elders. Intimate partner

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "Human Trafficking." *United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime*, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-Trafficking/Human-Trafficking.html.

⁶Tikkanen, Amy, and The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Sinaloa Cartel." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 Nov. 2015, www.britannica.com/topic/Sinaloa-cartel.

⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). "Femicide." *European Institute for Gender Equality*, 2016, eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1192?language_content_entity=en.

⁸ Chen, James. "What Is Extortion? Examples of Threats, Uses, and Legality." *Investopedia*, 20 Sept. 2017, www.investopedia.com/terms/e/extortion.asp.

violence includes stalking, sexual and physical violence, and psychological aggression by a current or former partner.”⁹

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

Mexico has a very complicated past. From drug lords to major events that have made the people feel very insecure about their homes and space as well as disrupted their lives and forced them to live under circumstances that they do not wish to live under, no matter their age.

Crime is one of the most concerning issues that Mexico must take action too nowadays. Mexican drug trafficking rings have caused a lot of distress to the public for more than a few reasons. Drug trafficking has led to fraud, which has attempted to defraud the police of Mexico and has succeeded. Drug trafficking and organized crime are very dangerous for the economy of Mexico and for the well-being of the people.

The crime rates started visibly increasing during the middle of the early 2000s¹⁰, when the President Felipe Calderon tried to make a statement when he started a big military campaign against drug cartels. Of course, this movement backlashed and Drug Cartels fought back and went against the government, which abrupted chaos and even more distress to the public.

Furthermore, there are a lot of other reasons why Mexico has reached such high crime rates. One factor is the corruption that seems to be present in the police force and in other government bodies. Corruption in the police force makes any government’s plans for dealing with issues even more difficult. For example if the police accept bribes from criminals, then it can be easier for them not to get convicted for their crimes.

Due to high levels of poverty, a lot of people will result in illegal activities as a way to survive given the lack of employment opportunities. As a result, some people will try other ways to escape reality such as drug trafficking, and drug dealing. Due to Mexico’s proximity to the USA, it is very easy to smuggle drugs in and out of the country, therefore making it easy and very tempting for the poorer to make a living. It is well-known that drug use and dealing can lead to violence¹¹, stress, and violence is a factor in the increase of homicides and femicides.

⁹ Huecker, Martin, et al. "Domestic Violence - StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf." *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, National Library of Medicine, StatPearls Publishing, 9 Apr. 2023, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499891/>.

¹⁰ Rios, Viridiana. "New Crime, Old Solutions: The Reason Why Mexico is Violent Again." *Wilson Center*, Feb. 2018, www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/new-crime-old-solutions-the-reason-why-mexico-violent-again.

¹¹National Library of Medicine. "Home." *PubMed Central (PMC)*, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/.

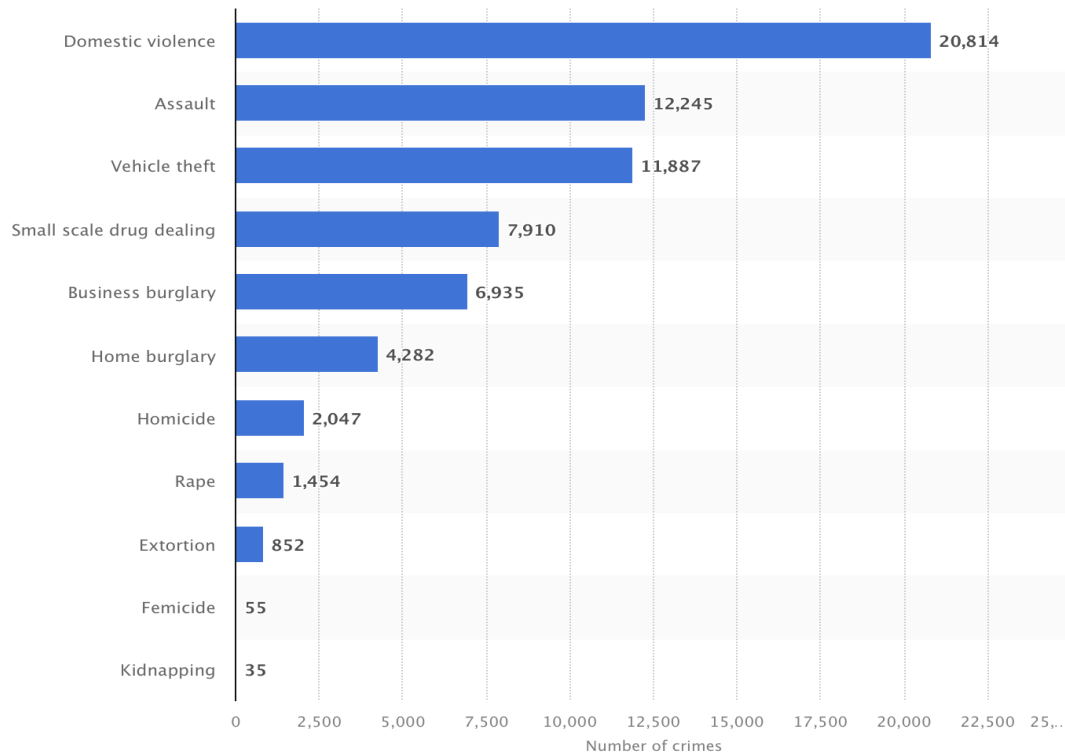


Fig. 1: Different forms of crime in Mexico, sorted by number of times a crimes commiteed¹²

Current Issue

The rising levels of criminality and the existing issues in Mexico have pushed the government to strive for improvement of the amelioration of the living conditions in Mexico. Hence, the beginning of the “war” on organized crime in 2006. However, since then, violent crimes have reached historic heights mainly under the administration of Manuel Lopez Obrador in 2018. Obradors government and previous successive ones have used the military to fight organized crime and enforce the law. However, soldiers, police and prosecutors for that matter have committed human right violations (such as torture, disappearances and killings).

Thousands of people continue to disappear every year. Mexico is not safe for journalists and human rights defenders. Under his leadership, the homicide rate was 28 homicides per 100.000 in 2021. According to the national statistics agency, the authorities resolved just over 1 percent of all crimes committed in 2021.¹³

¹² Statista Research Department. "Crimes in Mexico by Type 2023." *Statista*, 17 July 2023, www.statista.com/statistics/982523/crimes-number-mexico-type/.

¹³ Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2024: Rights Trends in Mexico." *Human Rights Watch*, 11 Jan. 2024, www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/mexico.
Section: "Security and Access to Justice"

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Mexico

Given the fact that the issue originates in Mexico, it is only reasonable that it plays a vital role. Mexico has always had a history of high crime rates, but a huge increase has been observed since the late 20th century and early 21st century, due to the rise of drug trafficking and organized crime. Mexico has taken a lot of actions over the past few years to try and fix the issue such as military interventions and the creation of the National guard. The National Guard is a brand-new law enforcement agency that comprises military and police forces whose goal is to reduce crime and improve the national security of the country. As well as law enforcement and social programmes. A social program of utmost importance is Prospera. Its original name was Progresas (1997) and in 2014 it changed its name to Prospera. Prospera is a program that has been funded by the government of Mexico. Prospera's goal is to reduce poverty through improving the health of its citizens. There is a screening process that determines the eligibility of households. Once accepted in the program they receive benefits from it. Furthermore, Prospera includes education, health and nutrition components to which the households involved must comply with in order to receive the benefits; by the end of 2014, 6,129,125 households were receiving benefits from the program¹⁴

United States of America (USA)

The United States of America has made international cooperation with Mexico to combat organized crime and drug trafficking. They have taken part in various projects such as the Merida Initiative that was released in 2008. The Merida Initiative's goal is to destroy crime organizations and generally assist the Mexican and Central American Governments in order to strengthen the border and the air force. Moreover, it has given access to 1.5 billion dollars of access to equipment and technology to combat drug cartels.¹⁵

Colombia

Colombia is a country that is affected by the crime that exists in Mexico and has also taken action to try and combat this issue. Colombia (being a neighboring country to Mexico) faced all the difficulties that Mexico also has been facing. Due to this matter, Mexico and Colombia have both joined forces and have been collaborating to try and reduce the issue. Both countries participate in regional forums, whose goal is to strengthen cooperation in Latin America. For example, one of the Organizations is called the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission otherwise known as (CICAD). CICAD is an organization that supports its members to try and reduce the drug issue, as well as organizes training programmes or even seminars that would

¹⁴ Lárraga, Dávila, and Laura G. "How Does Prospera Work?: Best Practices in the Implementation of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean." *IDB Publications*, Inter-American Development Bank, 15 Apr. 2016, publications.iadb.org/en/how-does-prospera-work-best-practices-implementation-conditional-cash-transfer-programs-latin.

¹⁵ Gittleston, Ben, and Armando Garcia. "First on ABC: Mexico to Pay \$1.5 Billion for US Border Security and Processing, Source Says." *ABC News*, 12 July 2022, abcnews.go.com/Politics/abc-mexico-pay-15-billion-us-border-security/story?id=86672772.

inform the public of the issues of drug trafficking as well as the other major issues that take place in Mexico.

Violence Prevention and Reduction Activity

The Violence Prevention and Reduction Activity Program otherwise known as (VPRA) is a program that seeks to reduce crime rates by addressing the main issues and deeper roots of the problem. The VPRA's goal is the reduction of crime rates in Mexico which aims to achieve, by working with the people of Mexico. To do so, they aim to combat criminality before it develops. Their efforts effectively transform the streets of Mexico into a safer environment. This way, the citizens of the Nation are able to lead their lives away from danger.¹⁶

WHO & The Prevention of Violence Program (PVL)

The World Health Organization is an organization that is responsible for the well-being of the people as well as the protection of their health. The PVL program has been created to try and eliminate and reduce violence against children as much as possible. For it to have worked so well so far, there have been international connections as well as international partners that do their best so that they can inform the public of activities that take place as well as incidents that are of importance.¹⁷

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1990-1995	The rise of drug cartels During the period of the 1990s, Mexico had an increase in drug cartels as for example the Sinaloa cartel. This cartel as well as others played a very important role in the rise of drug cartels in Mexico

¹⁶ Chemonics International. "Reducing Crime and Restoring Trust in Mexico." *Chemonics International*, 22 Feb. 2023, [chemonics.com/projects/reducing-crime-and-restoring-trust-in-mexico/](https://www.chemonics.com/projects/reducing-crime-and-restoring-trust-in-mexico/).

¹⁷ World Health Organization. "WHO Violence Prevention Unit: approach, objectives and activities." World Health Organization (WHO), 2 Sept. 2022, www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention.

December 11th 2006	In 2006 president Felipe Calderon started the military initiative against drug cartels, which was very offensive and led to them fighting back.
October 22nd 2007	In 2007 launched the Merida initiative, which was co-founded by the US as assistance towards Mexico whose goal was to combat drug trafficking and organized crime.
September 26th 2014	In the year 2014 occurred the disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College in the city of Iguala, Guerrero. This disappearance was very significant since it was an incident connected with corruption and organized crime which shocked the public.
July 1st 2018	In 2018 the people of Mexico voted for their now President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who promised his people a different viewpoint to try and tackle the issues the country faces.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (A/RES/55/25)¹⁸

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime otherwise known as UNTOC, adopted by General Assembly Resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2001. It is the main international treaty that addresses the issues of organized crime, human trafficking, drug trafficking and of course corruption. The goal of this treaty is to encourage international cooperation between member states so that all countries can be in this together to combat the issue successfully.

¹⁸ United Nations. "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime." *Official Document System - UN*, 8 Jan. 2001, documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n00/560/89/pdf/n0056089.pdf.



Protocol to Prevent, oppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol)

It was adopted as a part of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) in 2000 the Palermo Protocol focuses on trying to combat human trafficking. It is an international instrument addressing trafficking in women and children.

The Palermo protocol states that member states should outlaw human trafficking, always protect the victims no matter what, while providing them with needed recovery. Furthermore, it highlights the fact that cooperation between states is very crucial in order to prevent crime and generally combat trafficking.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)

The city of Sinaloa improved its ranking by five places in 2018, rising from 27 to 22 out of the 32 states of Mexico. This improvement in score reflects a 35 percent decrease in Sinaloa's homicide rate, the second largest in Mexico after Baja California Sur¹⁹. In the year 2017, Sinaloa put into action the Sectoral Public Security Program, which highlighted the state's roots of the problem and therefore could combat it easily. The aforementioned Programs include constructing strategic operating zones in order to increase the cooperation between the state and the police. Apart from Sinaloa, the 2019 MPI also figured out that international cooperation will have a bigger percentage of success than thought at the beginning, since help is coming from all over the place. Cooperation in general as a result of these programs tends to have a very positive effect, considering other minor crimes such as mugging, breaking, and entering and generally stealing.²⁰

Crime prevention strategies to support tourism

The biggest improvement in peace occurred in the Mexican state of Baja California Sur, which improved its ranking by seven places, from 32 in 2017 to 25 in 2018.²¹ This improvement is seemingly notable as the state ranked last as the least peaceful in 2017. Baja California Sur has reduced its homicide rate by 76%, from 105 to 26 per 100,000 people²².

¹⁹ Vision of Humanity. "Successful Local Strategies for Improving Peace in Mexico." *Vision of Humanity*, 16 May 2022, www.visionofhumanity.org/successful-strategies-improving-peace-in-mexico/.

²⁰ Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP). "Mexico Peace Index 2019: Identifying and Measuring the Factors that Drive Peace." *Vision of Humanity | Destination for Peace*, Apr. 2019, www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Mexico-Peace-Index-2019-English.pdf.

²¹ Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP). "Mexico Peace Index 2019: Identifying and Measuring the Factors that Drive Peace." *Vision of Humanity | Destination for Peace*, Apr. 2019, www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Mexico-Peace-Index-2019-English.pdf. Accessed 23 July 2024.

²² Vision of Humanity. "Successful Local Strategies for Improving Peace in Mexico." *Vision of Humanity*, 16 May 2022, www.visionofhumanity.org/successful-strategies-improving-peace-in-mexico/.

Baja California is one of the only states that has been categorized as one of the most peaceful ones nowadays, with this program. The way that this was achieved was through crime prevention strategies that will support tourism. Given the fact that Baja California Sur is dependent on tourism, it was only reasonable for them to want to figure out a solution that would also be beneficial towards that. Some of those strategies included security cameras, advanced security and surveillance videos that would be accessible at all times, which would be connected with local shops, hotel companies and generally anything that would be considered as a target for crime.

Military used to fight wars with cartels

In 1917, the Mexican constitution prohibited drugs with the goal of preventing violence. Ever since, the Mexican authorities have tried to deal with the drug problem. Thus, In 2006, when former President Felipe Calderon first declared a formal war on drugs, it was a decision with a long history. Consequently, the U.S government supported this war with the Merida Initiative (and with 3.4 billion dollars military agreement).

The initiative began in 2007 and ended in 2021. Mexico has also tried to address this issue by sending 128.000 Mexican soldiers to fight drug cartels and other criminal groups. However, this is a violation of Mexico's constitution which did not allow the use of the military for police work within the country. However, in 2022, Mexico approved a constitutional reform which allows the military to take on the role of domestic law enforcement until 2028.²³

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Creation of social programs

Creating such programmes will help educate the public, both grown-ups and the youth. Having these programmes will benefit the public and will expand the knowledge of the people. Moreover, there could be some victim support programmes to help the victims deal with their feelings and cope with their traumas. What they go through every day has consequences that influence the people negatively, therefore such programs would be very beneficial. Furthermore there could be a youth programme established. Youth programmes would be very crucial since children can be very easily scarred, and youth programmes could be in charge of how children will respond to trauma which they have faced in their life. In addition to that, the curricula of the school could include specific material regarding the safety of the people as well as how they could protect themselves. Overall, be educated upon the matter. An idea could be that NGOs can set up programmes to inform the students about how to protect themselves and lead better lives.

²³Janzen, Rebecca. "Mexico Made Criminal Justice Reforms in 2008 – They Haven't Done Much to Reduce Crime." *The Conversation*, 7 Feb. 2023, theconversation.com/mexico-made-criminal-justice-reforms-in-2008-they-havent-done-much-to-reduce-crime-198277.

Section 2: "Military used to fight war on drugs"

Technology

It is known that technology plays a vital role in our lives as we know it, and even though it has many functions, we can use it for something more beneficial. If there would be a way to further increase the number of the surveillance cameras that currently do or do not exist, it would be very beneficial for the authorities to be able to track down anyone who has broken the law, broken into a home, or stolen from someone. Security cameras of good quality would be able to identify the intruders. In this way, the neighborhood would automatically also be considered as safer from any crime committed. Furthermore, state of the art technology such as face recognition could be incorporated to help make the job of the authorities easier and faster. What's more, such a face ID could be used as evidence to get conviction in courts.

Emphasize cognitive therapy

Another alternative that would be beneficial for the public, is to focus on cognitive therapy. Cognitive therapy could help people deal with trauma and also help establish personal and community values. Research has shown that just by training previous offenders with these techniques, recidivism can be diminished up to 52%.²⁴ It seems that through this specific technique these therapists seem to be able to control the emotions of their patients and help them understand how they can improve themselves. Moreover it has been proven that they can also modify their way of thinking and understand them on a deeper level.²⁵

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²⁴ Rios, Viridiana. "10 Ways to Reduce Violence in Mexico | Wilson Center." Www.wilsoncenter.org, 3 Mar. 2016, www.wilsoncenter.org/article/10-ways-to-reduce-violence-mexico.

²⁵ "Tackling Crime and Violence in Latin America with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy." The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), 14 Dec. 2017, www.povertyactionlab.org/blog/12-14-17/tackling-crime-and-violence-latin-america-cognitive-behavioral-therapy.

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