Country Profile: Mexico

During the twentieth century, Mexico had a long series of military dictatorships followed by one-party dominance by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which finally ended in the election of 2000. The PRI has returned to power in the 2012 elections. Since 2000, the government's war against drug cartels has made Mexico one of the most dangerous countries in the world.

Past Crimes Against Humanity

In 2004, the supreme court of Mexico sentenced ex-President Luis Echeverria for having murdered thousands of students on June 10th of 1971 in the massacre known as "Jueves de Corpus" or "Thursday of Corpses", in the heart of Mexico City. The massacre was carried out by a paramilitary group called "Los Halcones", which the government armed with rifles to put down a largely non-violent student protest."

The massacre of Tlatelolco occurred on October 2 of 1968 when Mexico was hosting the Olympic Games. President Diaz Ordaz ordered security forces to disperse a rally of students in Mexico City. When the students did not immediately disperse, police and paramilitary forces moved in. They began shooting, and the crowd was caught in a murderous cross fire. Hundreds fell dead and many more were wounded. There has never been an inquiry, prosecution or convincing explanation for the slaughter from military or civilian authorities.

Current Gendercide

Since 1990 in Ciudad Juárez, just across the border from El Paso, Texas, USA, over 500 women have disappeared, usually on their way to or from work, and many of their bodies have been buried in shallow graves. The Mexican police have been unable to solve or stop these serial murders.

The murders have been hate crimes, ritual acts of rape and mutilation of impoverished, indigenous Mexican women and girls. A majority of the victims are poor migrant women from small villages and cities in the interior of Mexico, coming to Ciudad Juárez not to cross the border, but to find a job at *maquiladora,* a business organized since the NAFTA free trade agreement with the US, or as motel or hotel maids, or to attend schools. Police investigations have shown the victims share the same physical profile. Most are between the ages of 12 and 23, slim, short, dark-haired and dark-skinned.

Although some people have identified some root causes of this gendercide such as, machismo, sexism, domestic violence, armed gangs in the area, and drug cartels; families of the victims have been denied access to information about investigations by the Mexican police, and Mexico has not requested full assistance from more professional US investigators. Mexican police have even told families that their daughters "were misbehaving when they got lost," – an accusation unsupported by a shred of evidence. There have been cases when families have found their daughters' bodies in shallow graves, but they often have difficulty identifying them because the bodies are so badly decomposed. Frequently the only evidence they can find are articles of clothing that their daughters owned. The police have offered no DNA identification assistance. There was such serious suspicion that the notoriously incompetent and corrupt Mexican police were covering up evidence, that the President of Mexico sent in special agents from the Federal police to investigate the murders.

Hijas de Regreso a Casa (May Our Daughters Return Home) and Justicia para Nuestras Hijas (Justice for Our Daughters) have been organized by victims' mothers to press for investigations and prevention of these murders. There have been increasing threats and attacks against womens' human rights activists who are working for capture and imprisonment of the killers of these murdered women. According to organizations in Mexico, Chihuahua has the highest womens' homicide rate in the world, with 35 murders for each 100,000 women, 15 times higher than the average womens' homicide rate in the world.

Threats to indigenous peoples in Mexico

Mexico has been ruled by a white, europeanized aristocracy since its conquest by the Conquistadores. Its indigenous "Indian" groups have been suppressed and exploited. Mayans and other indigenous communities have suffered violence for centuries. The Mexican government continues to tolerate attacks by armed militias working for large white landowners (latifundios).

In May 2012, threats against Mayans living in Chiapas state included demands that they move out of their homes and off their land. Some Mayans have already been killed. On 19 May 2012, a Mayan leader received a written warning that said "Damn Indians, get away from here with your dead, get …out of here, and take your human rights with you. We've only just started the party, soon there will be food for the vultures"." ("maltidos indios, larguense con sus muertos, saquense a….con todo y sus derechos humanos. Apenas comenzamos la fiesta, pronto habrá comida para los Zopilotes").

Armed revolutionary groups have organized to defend the rights of indigenous peoples. Most of them have adopted Marxist ideologies. In 1994, the day NAFTA went into effect, a guerrilla movement in the state of Chiapas held a public protest to denounce capitalism. The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), a guerrilla group, has kidnapped several political leaders and civilians, and held them for ransom. Other guerrilla groups, including the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), and the Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army (ERPI) have also used kidnapping to raise money. The groups are usually made up of Marxist students, and under-employed professionals and workers, rather than peasants.

Drug cartels, organized and unorganized crime

Since the 1970's, a major challenge to the sovereignty of the Mexican government has come from drug trafficking cartels. During 2007 more than 2500 people were killed, many of them innocent civilians, and during 2008 the death toll rose to more than 6000. The death toll from drug cartel murders rose to over 47,500 in 2011.

People in Mexico are exhausted by the continuous violence that has made Mexico so dangerous. Because neither the military nor the federal government, through its police forces, have successfully stopped the violence, community "para-police" militias have been organized to fight drug cartels, just as they were in Colombia. If the plague of drug cartel killing is not stopped, Mexican society will descend into anarchy.

To fight the drug cartels, armed ranchers' militias have been formed known as the "army that liberates the people", and have hung banners with messages threatening the drug traffickers. However, two drug cartel financed groups, "The Black Command" and "The Avenger of the People", have also hung messages accusing a former leader of the ranchers of directing a drug cartel himself. And to make things worse, the decentralized, ultraviolent crime group known as "Los Zetas" literally beheads scores of people and leaves their dismembered bodies in public squares.

Genocide Watch considers Mexico to be at Stage 5, Polarization due to Mexico's polarized political, ethnic, and criminal groups and due to death threats against indigenous groups and women. Genocide Watch recommends:

- Full investigations must be conducted into threats made against Mayans and other indigenous peoples.
- Protection of women should be a priority. The US should offer training and help Mexican investigators of the murders of women in Ciudad Juarez. The World Bank and the Inter-American Bank should grant loans to increase the capacity of the Mexican police to recruit more women, and reduce violence against women.
- Effective anti-corruption laws and enforcement must be priorities for the Mexican government.

- The US should offer all its investigative, technological, and prosecutorial resources to help the Mexican government break the grip of the drug cartels on Mexico.
- The cultural roots of violence in Mexico should be investigated, including sexism, machismo, poverty, unemployment, and racism against indigenous peoples. Aid for preventive education should be a priority for international institutions to prevent further massacres and violence.