

AI Index: PRE 01/428/2009
08 December 2009

Mexico: Military abuses - Facts and Figures

Complaints of abuses committed by the military have risen significantly in the last two years.

In the first six months of 2009, the National Human Rights Commission in Mexico received 559 complaints of abuse by the military, 1,230 in the whole of 2008, compared to only 367 in 2007 and 182 in 2006.

After looking into these complaints, the National Human Rights Commission issued an increasing number of recommendations relating to abuses committed by military: 0 in 2006, 6 in 2007, 14 in 2008, and 25 to end October 2009.

Between March 2008 and September 2009 the Chihuahua State Human Rights Commission (Comision Estatal de Derechos Humanos, CEDH) and a municipal complaints office in Ciudad Juárez received more than 1,300 complaints of military abuses. (Chihuahua State Human Rights Commission, 2009).

Between January and November 2008, civilian prosecutors passed 381 complaints against the military for abuses to the military prosecutors in which civilians were victims.

The military then opened 110 investigations, which led to a mere 6 cases in which charges were filed. (Access to information request by Centro Prodh via IFAI/Infomex to SEDENA, [folio 0000700175808, 0000700176108, 0000700176308, 16 December 2008])

Context

Violence and murders attributed to organized crime in Mexico have spiraled in the last two years.

Nearly 14,000 murders were reported in the media between 2008 and July 2009 (National Human Rights Commission, July 2009).

The violence includes cases of kidnapping as well as the dismembering of bodies and decapitation.

In Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state, between the beginning of 2008 and September 2009, 3,052 killings were attributed to drug cartel violence. (State Human Rights Commission, July 2009).

Shortly after taking office in December 2006, President Calderón ordered a large increase in the deployment of military personnel, up to 50,000 troops, for law enforcement activities.

Military and other security force personnel have repeatedly been the target of attacks by criminal gangs. Between the start of 2007 and July 2009, 73 soldiers were killed. (Milenio Newspaper, July 2009).

The military have legal authority to detain criminal suspects when assisting prosecutors and police execute a judicial warrant or, like all citizens, when a suspect is apprehended in the act of committing an offence.