



# **Why has there been such an increase in homicides in 2017?**

**By Luz Paula Parra**

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Homicides have been increasing (and unfortunately this trend will continue) because the federal government has decided to **continue** with a militarized security policy that is generated “from the top”, and that addresses the consequences/the symptoms and not the structural causes of the violence and insecurity in the country. Specifically, homicides have increased to historical levels in 2017 because: a) Confrontations for territorial control and expansion continue between big drug cartels; 2) Confrontations between organized crime members and state agents (army, marines, federal police) are becoming more and more frequent; 3) Organized crime is attacking and “eliminating” members of civil society (journalists, social leaders, and citizens in general) more frequently; 4) There is a greater number of violent confrontations among citizens (organized or not) such as self-defense groups and criminal gangs; and 5) Murdered innocent civilians have become collateral damage at the hands of state security forces.

I would highlight that the militarization of public security forces has had the greatest impact on increase in homicides. Assigning public security tasks to the armed forces has contributed to rising lethality rates because these security agents are not trained to stop or monitor criminal activity, but to defend the state and to take out the enemy. Catalina Pérez Correa has shown that the Army’s lethality level is 10.4 civilian deaths for one soldier, and even greater involving interventions by the Marines, where lethality rates rise to 18.8 civilian deaths for each marine killed. When the Federal Police is in action, the proportion is 6.6 for one officer.

### **What should the Mexican government do about it?**

The security policy implemented until now has to change; it has failed in every aspect and has aggravated the spiral of violence and insecurity in the country. Policy must be long-term, integral, and state (not government) driven. It must address the causes of violence, such as corruption, impunity, and social-economic inequality. There must be investment to design

“bottom-up” security policies to include the voice and needs of those who suffer violence. Prevention policy must be constructed to include the target population, and especially to contribute to rebuilding the social fabric. In this context, pursuing a “war” strategy must be replaced with strategies to strengthen state institutions and their relations with civil society.

Among the long-term policies, I would highlight the formation of a civilian police that is professional and oriented toward the community that builds trust and increases its proximity to the citizenry, and where the priority is human safety.

The state should prioritize the institutional development of autonomous citizen oversight organizations and strengthened their ability to monitor security forces. Additionally the state should reinforce among security forces the importance of investigating and preventing crime.

Respect for the rule of law should be encouraged among citizens and public officials, for instance by promoting a culture of lawfulness campaigns.

Finally, **sources of criminal power must be weakened**: combating money laundering, drug and firearms trafficking are among the most important.