



Gallery of horrors

I. Objective and scope

To monitor and register examples of atrocities in Mexico during 2020, posted in national newspapers, as well as in journalistic websites. The importance of this work is that there is no public record of extreme violence, beyond quantitative reports.

It must be mentioned, that any record based on journalistic sources is inevitably incomplete. That is why this work has at least two important limitations: 1) many newspapers do not report events that could be associated with organized crime, due mainly to intimidation; 2) and, in the context of generalized violence, many high impact events, such as the murder of minors, women or people with disabilities, are not registered by the media.

Causa en Común defined “atrocities” as the use of physical force that includes laceration or extreme abuse; that causes the death of a high number of people, of members of vulnerable groups, or relevant political actors; or used to provoke terror. In order to classify the events, the following categories are used:

- a) *Massacre*: murder of three or more people.
- b) *Murder of members of vulnerable groups or relevant political actors*: human rights, social or environmental activists, journalists, minors, people with disabilities, senior public officials, or relevant political actors.
- c) *Laceration or extreme abuse*: aggravated femicide, mutilation, lynching or lynching attempt, desecration of corpses (massive graves and disintegration of human bodies), quartering, torture, slavery, aggravated rape or calcination.
- d) *Terrorism*.

In short, this exercise has the value of compiling specific events, which should not be forgotten, always bearing in mind that they represent a very small proportion of actual events in Mexico.

II. Main findings

- Between January and August 2020, *Causa en Común* registered:
 - 1,850 news about atrocities.
 - 3,073 atrocities.
 - 3,941 victims.



On several occasions, for one event there are many victims, and for each one of them, there can be several types of extreme violence. For example, on January 18th, 2020, in Huimanguillo, Tabasco, a 5-years-old boy was tortured and killed; his 15-years-old brother was tortured; and his 18-years-old sister was killed and quartered.

In this case, one news article, three victims, and four events of extreme violence (two torture cases, one infanticide and one case of quartering), were registered.

- The journalistic record shows that atrocities are perpetrated all over the country. They are mainly registered in Guanajuato, Michoacán, Jalisco, Chihuahua and Guerrero. Otherwise, the states with less registries are Baja California Sur, Campeche, Yucatán, Aguascalientes and Nayarit. Again, not all atrocities were registered by journalistic sources.
- The most frequent atrocities were desecration of corpses, especially in Jalisco (148 victims registered); massacres, mainly in Guanajuato (with 129 cases); and torture, mostly in Michoacán (with 62 cases).

III. Proposals

- Mexico needs national policies to standardize police and ministerial capacities and procedures, but also sociological approaches to develop local policies, which respond to the realities of each community and region of the country.
- It is evident that the accumulation of violence and atrocities can be attributed, not only to institutional factors, and to a generalized impunity, but also to the prevalence of serious mental illnesses. Therefore, instead of dismantling structures and programs in the health sector –as now happens-, they must be strengthened. Furthermore, mental care must be a priority at the national level.
- Each citizen and each community retains the responsibility of demanding to local and federal governments, at least: a) the resolution of cases that have aggrieved the community, based on solid investigations; and b) reforms of police and prosecutorial institutions, increasing wages and social benefits, improving training, and providing sufficient equipment and adequate infrastructure.

IV. A final thought

This is the first project in Mexico that registers and analyzes atrocities based on journalistic sources. What is the value of this exercise? It shows stories beyond crime statistics. It also shows that violence is not only carried out by organized crime, but by common Mexicans against Mexicans. There is criminal violence, yes, but also domestic violence, communal violence and social violence. This project does not provide a sociological, criminological, or statistical analysis. It is a gallery of horrors, a gallery that exposes the daily violence, the impunity, the educational collapse, and people's indifference. At the end of the day, addressing this indifference is the purpose of this work: to rescue our sensibility, our ability to be moved and touched by this accumulation of horrors.



Here is the complete list of journalistic registries of events that can be classified as “atrocities”.