

Mexico



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	About 120,000
Percentage of total population	About 0.2%
Start of current displacement situation	1994
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	120,000 (2010)
New displacement	About 115,000
Causes of displacement	Generalised violence, human rights violations
Human development index	56



Drug-cartel violence in Mexico escalated dramatically in 2010, with the violence reaching the highest levels since it broke out in 2006; as many as 15,000 people were killed as a result during the year. In 2010, northern states bordering the United States, where trafficking routes were concentrated, were most affected. While the violence has caused forced displacement, the government has not systematically collected figures to indicate its scale.

In 2010, most IDPs originated from the states most affected by violence, Chihuahua and Tamaulipas. Surveys conducted by a research centre in Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua estimated that around 230,000 people had fled their homes. According to the survey's findings, roughly half of them had crossed the border into the United States, with an estimated 115,000 people left internally displaced, predominantly in the states of Chihuahua, Durango, Coahuila and Veracruz. There have been few attempts to define the scale of displacement in small rural towns in Tamaulipas and Chihuahua, even though the violence is believed to be even more intense in those rural areas. Furthermore, forced displacement has taken place alongside strong economic migration flows, making it harder to identify and document.

In Tamaulipas, the Cartel del Golfo and another cartel known as the Zetas fought for trafficking routes, terrorising the civilian population as a way to assert territorial control, and also targeting local authorities and journalists. The municipalities most affected were Guerrero, Mier, Miguel Alemán, Camargo and Díaz Ordaz.

In Ciudad Mier, a small locality near the border with the United States, the Zetas issued an open threat to all the inhabitants in November 2010, saying that people who remained in the town would be killed. As a result, as many as 400 people fled to the nearby town of Ciudad Miguel Alemán.

In Chihuahua, where the Cartel de Sinaloa began to challenge the dominance of the Cartel de Juárez and its control of trafficking routes, the large industrial town of Ciudad Juárez also experienced increased violence and forced displacement. The Municipal Planning Institute reported in 2010 that there were up to 116,000 empty homes in Juárez.

In 2010, federal authorities did not acknowledge, assess or document the needs of the people displaced, instead focusing their efforts on fighting the drug cartels. International agencies present in the country with protection mandates, including UNHCR and ICRC, followed events but, in the absence of go-

vernment acquiescence, they did not establish programmes to provide protection and assistance or promote durable solutions for those forcibly displaced.

During the 1990s, up to 60,000 people were displaced in the southern state of Chiapas, during an uprising by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the group's subsequent confrontations with government forces. Those displaced were mostly indigenous people who fled violence at the hands of the army and allied militias, or members of indigenous groups that did not align with the EZLN and so were forced to leave by the Zapatistas.

OHCHR reported that between 3,000 and as many as 60,000 people were still internally displaced in 2003; and between 5,000 and 8,000 people were reportedly still displaced in 2007 according to local NGOs. In 2010, UNDP estimated that 6,000 families remained in displacement in Chiapas as a result of the Zapatista uprising.

More recently, sectarian violence between indigenous communities in Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca states, based often on religious affiliation, have also caused violence and displacement. The Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), a body created by the government, reported that over 1,000 indigenous members of the protestant minority were displaced from nine districts in 2009. In addition indigenous people, particularly in Chiapas, were reportedly displaced by paramilitary groups aligned with landowners, but there is no information as to their numbers.

In contrast to previous years when the plight of people displaced after the Zapatista uprising was largely forgotten, initiatives to address the situation of IDPs in these states gathered momentum in 2010. The Green Party brought a proposal to the Senate to amend the law to give the CDI more power and capacity to implement programmes to support the displaced indigenous population. There had been no state or federal legislation on internal displacement since a bill proposing a general law on internal displacement was defeated in the Senate in 1998.

In April 2010, UNDP launched a programme to support peacebuilding among displaced populations in Chiapas, which also aimed to persuade the state government and the federal government to acknowledge displacement and provide targeted support to IDPs, including through mechanisms to help them recover the land and homes that they had lost.