

12-9-2009

Mexico Falls Several Slots In Global-corruption Index For 2009

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex>

Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "Mexico Falls Several Slots In Global-corruption Index For 2009." (2009). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/5359>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Mexico Falls Several Slots In Global-corruption Index For 2009

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 2009-12-09

Mexico's reputation as a corrupt country worsened with the release of the Transparency International (TI) 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in mid-November. The index ranked Mexico as the 89th most corrupt country on the list of 180 countries, a decline of 17 spots from the 2008 index, when Mexico was ranked at 72. There are other areas where Mexico's reputation has suffered as well.

In early December, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which is affiliated with the Organization of American States (OAS), said Mexico ranked first in 2009 among countries in the hemisphere in complaints about human rights violations. The report from the commission comes as a sister organization, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San Jose, Costa Rica, deliberates whether the Mexican government bares responsibility in at least some of the murders of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juarez since 1993.

Anti-drug effort exposes corruption

The TI index, based on 13 separate expert and business surveys during the past year, gave Mexico a rating of 3.3 for 2009, compared with 3.6 in 2008. A rating of zero on the scale indicates high levels of corruption and 10 very low levels. The organization arrives at the rating with a formula using data provided by the various surveys. One of the main factors considered is the frequency and/or size of bribes in the public and political sectors. Political observers generally agree that Mexico's slide in the rating is associated in part with increased attention to drug-related corruption by elected leaders and law-enforcement officials (SourceMex, May 07, 2009, August 19, 2009, and October 07, 2009).

In a statement regarding the results in Mexico, TI said the trends in the past year "demonstrate a serious problem of corruption." The TI report pointed to other structural problems in Mexico, such as the weakness of government institutions and the lack of a national policy to combat corruption. Critics say Mexico has failed to follow up on an effort initiated during the administration of ex-President Vicente Fox to address corruption. "Between 2000 and 2003, Mexico placed a high emphasis on transparency, which is an efficient tool against corruption," said Eduardo Bohorquez, director of Transparencia Mexicana, TI's Mexican affiliate. "We have not moved to the second phase, which is an effective accountability and a coordination of national with local laws." Compared with the rest of Latin America, Mexico's level of corruption was on par with countries like Guatemala, Peru, and Colombia, but far below countries like Chile, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. Those countries had a rating of 5 or higher.

The highest-rated country in the hemisphere was Canada at 8.7, followed by the US with a rating of 7.5. Globally, the least-corrupt countries were Singapore, Denmark, and New Zealand, while the highest level of corruption was found in Somalia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Sudan. TI

president Huguette Labelle said countries can control the growth of corruption by strengthening their legislative and judicial branches, promoting strong and independent auditing agencies, and devoting adequate resources to combating illegal activities.

Members of Congress urged President Felipe Calderon's administration to take the conclusions seriously. Sen. Manlio Fabio Beltrones, floor leader of the opposition Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in the upper house, prompted the administration to take the necessary actions to reverse the situation. "[The TI report] is an important and serious alert for our country," said Beltrones. Other observers said changes can only take place with a transformation of values in Mexico. "Corruption will only subside in Mexico on the day when Mexicans, starting with elected leaders, change their convictions and place a higher emphasis on respect for the law," wrote columnist Leo Zuckermann in the Mexico City daily newspaper *Excelsior*. "We are still influenced by the old values that suggest that those who play by the rules do not prosper." Administration officials said other factors are at play in the high levels of corruption, such as outdated bureaucratic rules. Salvador Vega Casillas, head of the Secretaria de Funcion Publica (SFP), said there are more than 18,000 norms and regulations in the federal government, which make operations slow and inefficient.

As a result of more than 22,000 formal complaints, the SFP has decided to review the norms. "We have eliminated 3,000 in one year, but this is not enough," said Vega Casillas. Corruption has also extended to private business transactions. In a report published in early December, the auditing company PricewaterHouseCooper (PwC) said 51% of the companies that it surveyed reported having been victims of fraud in 2009. This is the fifth-highest rate among the 54 countries where PwC conducted its survey and far higher than the global norm of 30%. The level of fraud represents 6% to 7% of the earnings of companies in Mexico, said PwC official Luis Vite.

Mexico also tops list of human rights complaints

Beyond the problems with corruption, Mexico has also gained a reputation as a country where impunity rules. In early December, the Washington-based OAS human rights commission reported that Mexico ranked first in the number of complaints filed in 2009. The commission said Mexicans accounted for 205 of the 1,255 complaints filed through late 2009. The issues varied, ranging from military impunity and torture to violations of freedom of expression, institutional corruption, discrimination against indigenous groups, and violence against women, including government inaction on the murders in Ciudad Juarez over the past decade. After evaluating all the complaints, the commission decided to accept only five cases. Still, commission sources said there has been a disturbing increase in the past several years in complaints against Mexican government institutions.

Complaints lodged with the commission against Mexico averaged 160 annually over the past seven years, compared with only 43 in 2000. The most complaints during the period were filed in 2006, reaching 215. The use of the armed forces in the Calderon government's campaign against drug traffickers has resulted in violations of individual rights (SourceMex, August 12, 2009) and is the subject of some of the complaints lodged this year. "The use of the Army for domestic situations has a tragic history throughout Latin America," said Santiago Canton, the commission's executive secretary. Complaints about the Mexican armed forces have come from other quarters as well.

In early December, Amnesty International (AI) released a report providing evidence that Mexican soldiers have tortured suspects and have been involved in forced disappearances during the fight against the drug cartels. In the AI report, one prominent case involves 25 police officers accused of corruption. The police complained that the army put their feet in water and applied electric shocks to their bodies, including their genitals. Canton said 90% of the cases brought before the commission are rejected. In some cases, complaints are referred to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San Jose.

Like the commission, the court is an arm of the OAS. Court said to hold Mexico responsible in some women's deaths in Juarez One situation that the commission sent to the OAS court involved a complaint that the Mexican federal government bore some responsibility in the murders of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juarez because of its decision not to take action when the murders began in the early 1990s. Rather than intervene, the federal placed the responsibility on local and state authorities (SourceMex, April 30, 2003 and June 23, 2004). The commission sent the matter to the human rights court in 2007.

The complaint did not consider the state's culpability in all the murders but only in three cases brought for its consideration. The three victims in this case are Claudia Gonzalez, Esmeralda Herrera, and Berenice Ramos, whose bodies were found in a cotton field in 2001. After months of deliberation, the court appeared to reach a decision in favor of the victims in November 2009 but had not made an official announcement as of mid-December. A ruling does not carry any punitive measures but merely ascribes culpability and offers recommendations.

Attorneys for the families of the victims said they were informed that the decision would be in their favor. "We believe that a ruling condemning the government's [lack of action] will set a precedent not only in Mexico but throughout the region," said David Pena, an attorney representing the relatives of the victims. The Calderon administration is also expecting a ruling favoring the victims. But officials at SEGOB and the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) had no comment other than to point out that the government's testimony before the court described some measures that have been taken to address the situation, including appointing special prosecutors (SourceMex, March 01, 2006). Government officials also pledged to continue to place a high priority on eliminating all violence against women.

-- End --