**Input for report on violence and the right to food (MEXICO)**

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Prepared for:

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 In Mexico, the twenty-first century has been marked by high levels of violence, with concern about violence, crime and insecurity being extremely high in all social groups. Homicide rates have consistently grown over the last decade, reaching 35,000 deaths in 2021 alone [(INEGI, 2022a)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?Ou5bhY). Since 2006, over 106,000 people have disappeared, and thousands of mass graves have been found, filled with bodies that are often unidentified [(Secretaria de Gobernación, 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?dvMBek). Official statistics estimate that there are millions of assaults, extortions and kidnappings each year, of which over 90% are never formally registered or reported [(INEGI, 2022b)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?OZlBza).

While the conventional narrative about these extraordinary levels of violence tend to attribute it to the presence of “organized crime” or criminal actors, research shows that there are multiple, interconnected factors that can better explain the phenomenon: 1) The political fragmentation and instability brought on by the dismantling of the Revolutionary Institutional Party’s long-standing hegemony at the tail end of the twentieth century has created a situation in which political violence is normalized and in which different armed groups have proliferated; 2) The militarization of the war against drugs, which since 2006 has led to much not only to greater violence between the state and organized criminal groups, but also increased abuse of civilian populations by armed forces; 3) The impoverishment and dispossession of rural populations as a result of NAFTA and neoliberal agricultural policies, which has led to large-scale migration from rural areas to urban areas and abroad, creating instability and conditions for conflict to proliferate; 4) Conflicts over territorial exploitation and extractivism throughout the country, which are largely resolved through political and everyday violence, and which have also led to dispossession. [(Blazquez & Le Cour Grandmaison, 2021; Maldonado Aranda, 2012, 2014; Paley, 2014; Zavala, 2014)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?U06JkS).

Despite the well-studied phenomenon of violence in Mexico, there is very little in the way of research or public policies that explicitly link the question of violence and conflict to food systems, food security or the right to food. Indeed, researchers have recently identified this as an area that is in urgent need of attention [(Hayden, 2019)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?PwXF96); Grupo de Trabajo Sobre Violencia y Alimentación 2022).

In general terms, we can see that violence affects food production and distribution, as well as consumption:

1. **Effects of violence on food systems, production and distribution:** In some parts of Mexico, rural producers are forced to produce certain substances (sometimes illicit, such as marijuana or poppy). More frequently, however, as organized criminal groups (in conjunction with state actors) expand their enterprises beyond trafficking or selling illegal substances, extortion and kidnapping have become common practices which affect a diversity of people, including food systems actors. Producers may find themselves forced to pay “protection fees” or “taxes” in order to be allowed to harvest or sell their crops. These forms of extortion are backed by threats of violence and murder. The phenomenon has been particularly well documented in Michoacan, Sinaloa, Veracruz and Jalisco, but is widespread throughout the country. It affects small and large scale producers alike, and there is evidence that producers are relocating and fleeing in response to the violence. [(Gómez-Johnson, 2015; Herrera & Martinez-Alvarez, 2022; Maldonado Aranda, 2012; SAMANO & LEAL, 2020; Solano Ramirez & Acuña Villavicencio, 2021)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?MCpchb)

In addition to the threat of violence in the countryside, workers in urban food markets, as well as truck drivers and delivery personnel face threats of violence, robbery, extortion and kidnapping. Highways and rest stops in many parts of the country may be vulnerable to such practices by state, military and criminal actors. Vendors in wholesale and public markets in some urban areas are targeted as well. In all cases, violence in food systems contributes to lack of transparency and makes regulation more difficult [(Hayden, 2019, 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?nOS2F9).

1. **Effects of violence on food security and consumption:** On the consumption side, fear of violence is a factor that is known to severely restrict the everyday mobility of women and children [(Gómez et al., 2004; Mejía-Dorantes & Villagrán, 2020)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?RJhsDe). Limiting mobility can reduce employment and schooling opportunities, as well as modes of transportation. Since food security is related not only to income but also to household organization, routines and mobility, we can surmise that widespread insecurity affects food security in general, and especially for vulnerable populations such as female-headed households and those with children. These households are already more likely to be food insecure [(ENSANUT, 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?odppRZ). In addition, violence may be the cause for both transnational and internal migration, which is also linked to increased food insecurity [(Aragon Gama et al., 2020; Deschak et al., 2022)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?MYhjcL).

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