

FRAMING VIOLENCE
ACTIVISTS ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
IN CONTEMPORARY MEXICO

SONJA KOLP

MASTERS THESIS
LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES

STUDENT NO. 0302627
SUPERVISOR PROF. DR. W.G. PANSTERS
OCTOBER 2011

TO ALL THE WOMEN IN MEXICO
WHO LIVE THEIR LIVES IN VIOLENCE

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the problem of violence against women in Mexico. It attempts to answer the question how local activists engage with violence against women against the background of the current security crisis. It argues that activists use the strategy of framing to bring issues to the public agenda. In case of violence against women activists frame the issue as a human rights violation. This provides activists access to a global human rights network and the language of rights to address the issue and put pressure on the government to properly investigate crimes against women. Activists are confronted with many obstacles in their work. They encounter uncooperative authorities that trivialize the problem of violence against women and a legal system with many flaws. Both contribute to a climate of impunity and permissibility regarding cases of violence against women. The current security crisis has worsened this problem as authorities are caught in the discourse of the ‘war on drugs’ and more women have become victims of violence over the past years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the realization of my research and this thesis I have been accompanied and supported by many people. On this page I would like to take the opportunity to thank some of them. In the first place my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, professor Wil Pansters, who shares with me a same passion for Mexico and who has supported me during the past two years that I have spent working on this project. Without his patience and knowledge I could not have completed this difficult task next to a fulltime job. In the second place I thank my employer, the KLPD, for offering me the opportunity to study and grant me both time and finances to complete this master. Furthermore, I would like to thank Mari Claire Acosta, who has been very helpful in introducing me with several human rights activists in Mexico. Thanks to her wide social network I have been able to find the right persons in very little time. I am also grateful to Juan Carlos Gutierrez Contreras of the CMDPDH, for offering me a work place during my stay in Mexico and introducing me to his colleagues. One of these colleagues is Ana Yeli Pérez, who has been very patient and cooperative in answering all my questions. Of course I also thank all the other respondents who have taken the time on such a short notice to talk to me and provide me with the information I needed. Without them I could not have conducted this research. Last but not least I thank my family, friends and boyfriend for supporting me throughout all my studies and especially during the past two and a half years that I have studied the LACS master. Your support gives me wings.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	6
CENTRAL RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	8
METHODOLOGY AND SETTING.....	8
STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	9
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	10
1.1 VIOLENCE.....	10
1.2 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	11
1.3 NGOs & TANS	15
1.4 WOMEN’S TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS.....	18
1.5 CONCLUSION	19
2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN MEXICO	21
2.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE	21
2.2 DEFINING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	22
2.3 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	24
2.3.1 <i>The victims and agressors</i>	25
2.3.2 <i>Geographical location</i>	28
2.4 SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS IN THREE STATES	30
2.4.1 <i>Estado de Mexico</i>	30
2.4.2 <i>Jalisco</i>	31
2.4.3 <i>Morelos</i>	33
2.5 CONCLUSION	34
3. MEXICO’S CURRENT SECURITY CRISIS.....	36
3.1 THE DRUG TRADE IN MEXICO	36
3.2 THE SECURITY CRISIS.....	38
3.3 MEXICO’S CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS.....	42
3.3.1 <i>The Sinaloa Federation camp</i>	43
3.3.2 <i>The Los Zetas camp</i>	45
3.3.3 <i>Independent organizations</i>	46
3.4 CONCLUSION	48
4. THE RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN MEXICO’S CURRENT CONTEXT	49
4.1 THE SECURITY CRISIS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	49
4.2 INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE	51
4.3 THE ADVOCACY NETWORK AND ITS WORKING METHODS.....	55
4.4 ACTIVISTS AND THE SECURITY CRISIS	60
4.5 CONCLUSION	61
CONCLUSION.....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	634

INTRODUCTION

'A total of 34,612 people have died in drug-related violence in Mexico over the past four years, according to new, more detailed government statistics. Unveiling the database, President Felipe Calderon acknowledged that 2010, which saw 15,273 deaths, had been "a year of extreme violence".'

(BBC News, 13 January 2011)¹

As the above mentioned citation reveals, Mexico's recent history has been marked by high levels of violence. The past year (2010) has witnessed more drug related deaths than any other year before in Mexican history. Since Felipe Calderon became president in 2006 and embarked on a strategy of 'narco-elimination', the death toll has kept on rising. Shootouts between rival cartel members and government troops have become a normal view in border cities such as Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo. Much of the violence is concentrated here, since drug cartels fight each other over the control of drug routes leading into U.S. territory. The government forces try to prevent this from happening, which has resulted in even more violence. Also non-US border areas in Mexico have witnessed increasing levels of violence, especially the states at the Pacific coast, such as Michoacán, Sinaloa and Guerrero. Here South American cocaine is brought in by ships, causing fights over control of territory between drug cartels and with the state.

With increasing levels of violence and incidents taking place on a daily basis, it is no surprise that the national media focus on this drug war almost constantly. Everyday newspapers report about the gruesome murders, beheadings, kidnappings and shootouts. Also the international media are absorbed by the violence in Mexico. The above mentioned quote of the BBC is only one from many international news reports focusing on the violence in Mexico. This overall focus on drug-related violence has left little space for other news and developments in the country. However, the drug war is not the only problem Mexico faces.

Only a few years ago, before Calderon became president and the attention shifted towards the war on drugs, Mexico was known for other forms of violence, especially in the border region. There, as of the 1990s women have become victims of gender-based violence, particularly in the city of Juárez. In the period between 1993 and 2004 over 500 women have been found dead in the surroundings of the city. Their bodies showed evidence of rape, torture and mutilation. Even though other cities, such as Chihuahua, faced similar problems, the

¹ BBC News, 'Mexico updates four years of drug war deaths to 34.612', 13 January 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12177875>

murders appear to have been most frequent in Ciudad Juárez. Due to a weak and corrupt law enforcement system the Mexican government has failed to investigate these crimes adequately. With a few exceptions, the ones responsible for these crimes have not yet been identified, less so apprehended. As a result, a climate of impunity has emerged.

Several national and international non-governmental organizations have tried to address this problem and put pressure on the Mexican government to investigate these crimes properly. They have organized protests and marches to raise global awareness and discussion about the *feminicidios* in Mexico. The most successful period has probably been the year 2004, with the organization of the V-Day International March for Juárez, in which more than 7500 people from over 20 countries participated (Staudt 2008).

When in 2006 Calderón was elected president and his anti-drug policy was implemented, attention shifted towards drug-related violence, especially in the border region where drug cartels and their fighting over power pose a serious problem to the government. This shift of focus almost made the problem of gender-based violence disappear. Several human rights organizations, however, claim otherwise. For example, the *Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio* (OCNF) (2010), an alliance of 43 human rights organizations represented in 19 states of the republic, registered that in the period between 2007 and 2008 1221 women had been assassinated in 13 states of the country. In the period between January 2009 and June 2010 the OCNF documented 1728 violent assassinations of women in 18 states of the country. Moreover, the OCNF identified cases of femicide in 11 of these 18 states. In these 11 states 890 cases of femicide were documented.

These numbers demonstrate that grave problems of gender-based violence and femicide persist in Mexico, even though the focus drawn to it has been far less since 2006. The drug violence and security crisis that has unfolded over the past years has been absorbing all (inter) national attention. Nowadays little is heard about violence against women in Mexico. One could easily assume the problem has diminished, although the numbers of feminicides demonstrate otherwise. With these high levels of violence against women and little attention for the problem, I wonder how activists try to address this issue. Activists make it their job to pressure governments and to put issues on the public agenda. During the early 2000s they have been particularly successful in raising global awareness and create discussion about the feminicides in Ciudad Juárez. It seems to have become more difficult for activists to achieve awareness in the current context. I am curious to find out how activists try to address the issue of gender-based violence nowadays and make sure the problem will not be ignored

or forgotten. In the following paragraph I will outline the central research problem and research questions I have formulated to investigate this subject matter.

Central research problem

The central research problem I have formulated to investigate how NGOs and activists try to address the issue of violence against women in the current context is:

How do (inter)national NGOs and activists engage with gender-based violence in Mexico against the background of the current security crisis?

In order to investigate this subject and provide answers to this central research problem it is necessary to answer the following sub-questions:

1. *What are the main features of gender-based violence in Mexico?*
2. *What are the main features of the current security crisis in Mexico?*
3. *How do NGOs and activists assess the relationship between gender-based violence and the security crisis in Mexico and how does it affect their work?*

The purpose of this research is to clarify the problem of gender-based violence in Mexico, especially in the current context of everyday violence and contribute to the visibility of the problem and support activists in their cause. The more attention is given to this subject, hopefully the sooner authorities will understand its importance and the necessity to act and protect women from becoming victims of violence.

Methodology and setting

For my research I have used qualitative research methods. I have conducted desk research and carried out field work in Mexico in the period between 4 April 2011 and 4 May 2011. During my short period of field work in Mexico I have tried to talk to as many activists and spokespersons of (non) governmental organizations that address the problem of violence against women as possible. In total I have held 10 open to semi-structured interviews. Five of these interviews were with persons working for different NGOs in the state of Jalisco, Morelos, Estado de Mexico and the Federal District that form part of the OCNF. The other five interviews were with persons working for other (non) governmental organizations and with persons working independently as human rights activists.

I have also held various informal conversations with activists who became my ‘colleagues’, as I temporarily worked at the office of one of the NGOs that forms part of the OCNF, the *Comisión Mexicana por la Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos* (CMDPDH) in Mexico city. I have also attended a workshop about women’s rights in a local community, provided by activists from the OCNF and I have been present at two group meetings of a research team headed by Mari Claire Acosta about impunity and violence against women in Mexico. Lastly, I visited a forum about femicide where several human rights activists participated.

When I finished my field work in Mexico I was invited to participate at the 17th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. There I have attended several Council meetings about topics such as violence against women, arbitrary detention and independence of judges and lawyers. I have also been present at a side event specifically about Mexico, where the current security crisis was discussed in more detail. I have also talked informally with activists from international non governmental organizations such as the *Red Internacional de Derechos Humanos* (RIDH) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT).

Structure of the thesis

The first chapter of this thesis draws at the theoretical context of my research project. I will focus on the concepts of gender-based violence/violence against women and non governmental organizations and their working methods in order to understand the academic debate in which my research problem is situated. Chapters two to four will encompass the empirical part of this thesis and be structured according to the research sub-questions. Chapter 2 will thus focus on the main characteristics of violence against women in Mexico. The third chapter will discuss the development and characteristics of the current security crisis in Mexico. The fourth chapter of this thesis will discuss how activists interpret the relationship between gender-based violence and the security crisis. I will also focus specifically on how they try to address the issue of violence against women in these circumstances. I will end this thesis with a conclusion which hopes to answer to the central research problem.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to explore theoretical debates on violence in general and gender-based violence in particular and on non governmental organizations and their methods to bring issues to the public agenda. Knowledge of these theoretical concepts is necessary in order to understand the empirical situation of gender-based violence in Mexico and how activists try to address this issue.

1.1 Violence

For this study I will take the definition of violence as formulated by the World Health Organization as a starting point. This definition is as follows:

'The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' (WHO 2002:5).

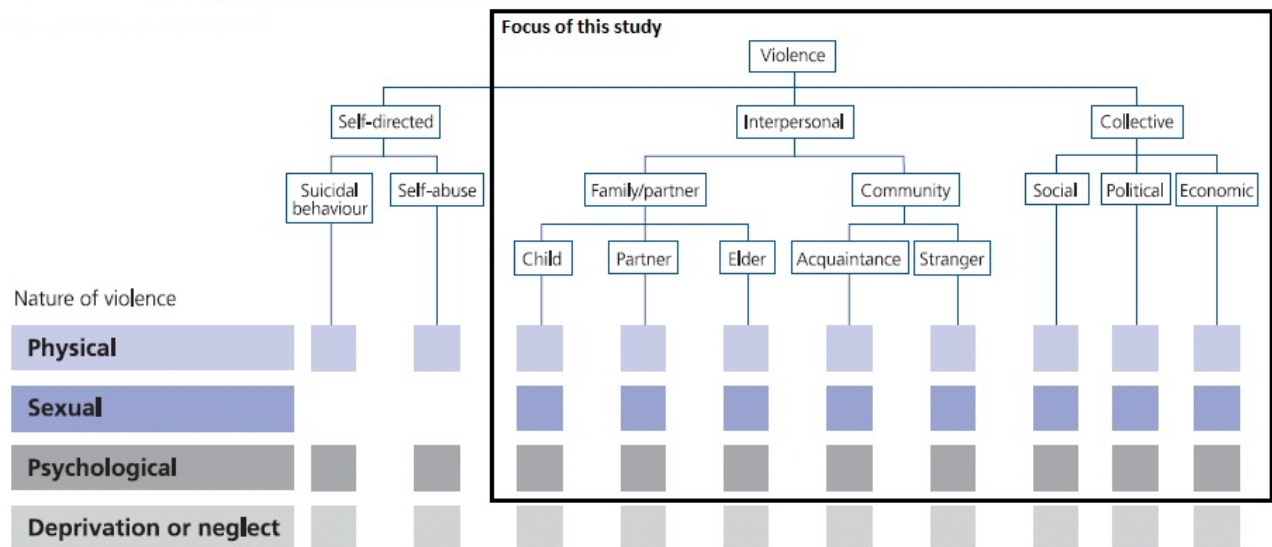
I choose to use this definition since it includes all acts of violence, whether they are public or private, reactive or proactive, criminal or non-criminal. All these aspects are important in understanding the causes of violence.

The World Health Organization further specifies the concept of violence by developing three categories of violence. The division is made between self-directed, interpersonal and collective violence. The first focuses on violence committed against oneself such as suicide. The second category means violence committed between family members and intimate partners, generally taking place in the home, for example child abuse. However, it also encompasses forms of violence that is expressed between individuals that are unrelated and which mostly takes place outside the home, for example rape or sexual assault by strangers. The last category involves violence that is expressed by larger groups of individuals or states and can be split up in social, political or economic violence. Examples of this are respectively terrorist acts, state violence but also more indirect forms of violence such as attacks with the purpose of disrupting economic activity (WHO 2002:6).

The nature of violence can be divided into several types: physical, sexual, psychological and deprivation or neglect. All types of violence can be combined with the

above mentioned categories, except for self-directed violence that is sexual of nature. The figure below demonstrates the combination of categories and types. Especially the categories and types of violence within the black frame are of special interest to this study.

Figure 1. A typology of violence



Source: WHO 2002, World Report on Violence and Health, pp. 7 (the black frame is my highlighting)

1.2 Gender-based violence

The definition of violence from the World Health Organization is a broad definition that works well as a starting point but it remains very general. Within the area of interpersonal and collective violence another dimension could be added, which is gender. Gender occupies an important position in relation to violence. Nevertheless, this has not been sufficiently recognized and especially violence against women has received less attention compared to other forms of social and political violence (Hume 2009).

Some scholars have argued that violence committed against women within the private sphere is insufficiently recognized. Historically the private sphere has been identified as the female domain, since it is largely considered to be the sphere pertaining to the family and reproduction, both regarded as women's activities. On the contrary the public sphere has been largely identified as the male domain. This public/private division works as a mechanism of organizing social and political life and has become deeply embedded in our ways of understanding the world (Hume 2009).

What is recognized as violence is influenced by this deeply gendered public/private dichotomy. The most common forms of violence within the private realm have often been considered as private affairs, personal matters and not as violence at all. Women's experiences are kept silent, which results in accepting violence against women as normal and tolerable and it reinforces gendered power relations (Hume 2009, WOLA 2007a).

The academic debate and policy initiatives surrounding violence against women in the private sphere has led to growing public awareness. A point worth mentioning is the 1994 signing of the Inter-American convention on the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women, also referred to as the Convention of Belém do Pará. It states that every woman has the right to live free of violence in both public and private spheres, and to have access to effective justice to protect this right (Convention of Belém do Pará, chapter 1). Violence against women is defined as:

'[...] any act or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere' (Convention Belém do Pará, Chapter 1, Article 1).

The definition used in the Convention of Belém do Pará is a specification of the definition of the World Health Organization. It pays special attention to violence against women, but adopts the same types and categories of violence as in the WHO definition. This becomes clear in the second article of the Convention of Belém do Pará:

*'Violence against women shall be understood to include physical, sexual and psychological violence:
that occurs within the family or domestic unit or within any other interpersonal relationship, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the woman, including, among others, rape, battery and sexual abuse;
that occurs in the community and is perpetrated by any person, including, among others, rape, sexual abuse, torture, trafficking in persons, forced prostitution, kidnapping and sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as in educational institutions, health facilities or any other place; and
that is perpetrated or condoned by the state or its agents regardless of where it occurs.'* (Convention Belém do Pará, Chapter 1, Article 2).

As the debate on violence against women deepened, the delimitation of this subject became more sophisticated. By 1995 at the United Nations' Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing the problem of violence against women was redefined and the new definition not only included the act of violence itself, but also the threat thereof:

[...] “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life’ (United Nations, Beijing Declaration 1995:48).

Except for the threat of violent acts, also more specific cultural forms of violent acts were mentioned in the Declaration, such as marital rape, female genital mutilation, trafficking in women and forced prostitution. With this process of defining and redefining violence against women important steps have been taken to criminalize and raise awareness about gender based violence.

The intergovernmental institutions that helped framing the issue and formulated definitions of violence against women, are not the only actors that participate and shape the debate. Feminists also play a part in this. Over the past years feminists have contributed to redefining what is perceived as violence against women. Through listening to women’s experiences of abusive behavior, definitions of violence against women expanded as women named and addressed previously unnamed forms of violence. Radford & Stanko (1991) argue that much of the violence against women captured in surveys still remains uncriminalized, apparently because behavior experienced by women as abusive doesn’t fit into man-made legal categories (Ibid:188-189).

Feminists have particularly addressed the private/public distinction in defining gender based violence. They have tried to demonstrate that in patriarchal or male-dominated societies family and heterosexuality form central institutions in which private struggles around power relations are performed. Violence is then frequently used as a form of control by the powerful, but remains invisible to the public. What’s more is the violence that does become visible, such as crimes committed by serial killers, rapists and psychopaths, draws much attention, but focuses on the danger for women to be in public, instead of on the gendered nature of the crimes (Wright 2006, Monárrez Fragoso 2002, WOLA 2007a).

To deal with these problems feminists have proposed an alternative way of defining violence. By considering violence as a gendered phenomenon, all violence should be analyzed as gender based violence (Kelly 1998; Radford et. al 1996; Hume 2009; Jacobs et al 2000, Monárrez Fragoso 2002). Mo Hume (2009) argues that gender is central to understanding how and what we perceive as violence. Since violence does not affect all people in the same way and since people define violence from different positions of power, Hume calls for an

interpretation of violence that takes into account characteristics of people. Besides gender, other identities play a crucial role in power relations, such as class, ethnicity and age. Hume therefore talks of a theory that takes into account these multiple and intersected identities and power relations (2009:23). Even though I believe Hume makes a useful point here, this study doesn't want to engage too deeply in the discussion about definition. I prefer to concentrate on what is happening in Mexico. I therefore use the leading definition of gender-based violence as mentioned in the Beijing Declaration.

Another phenomenon worth mentioning in light of the debate about gender-based violence is what has been identified as the clearest manifestation of gender-based violence: *femicide*. Radford & Russell (1992) define femicide not simply as the murder of females but rather as the '*killing of females by males because they are female*' (Ibid:3). They emphasize that it is more than female homicide. Lagarde (2006) took this concept for her study on femicide in Mexico and translated it into Spanish as *feminicidio*, to accentuate its difference from *homicidio femenino*. She also modified the definition of the concept, for in Mexico *feminicidio* encompasses more than only the killing of women for being women. Lagarde (2006) and her colleagues noticed that the definition of Radford and Russell is very general and includes all sorts of violence: community violence, labor violence but also institutional violence, which in Mexico is closely connected to impunity. Lagarde wanted to include this particular element in the definition and therefore added institutional violence as part of the phenomenon itself:

'En México la impunidad es parte del feminicidio y por eso partimos de la definición de violencia institucional, la discriminación en la impartición de justicia, la discriminación en las averiguaciones, en los peritajes; en todo el proceso hay una mirada profundamente misógina' (Lagarde 2006:220-223).

Sanford (2008) adopted this transformed definition of *feminicidio* and translated it into English as *femicide* for her study on this issue in Guatemala. She emphasizes the responsibility of the state as a crucial part of the definition of femicide in contrast to femicide:

'The concept of femicide helps to disarticulate belief systems that place violence based on gender inequality within the private sphere and reveals the very social character of the killing of women as a product of relations of power between men and women. It also allows for an interrogation of legal, political and cultural analyses of institutional and societal responses to the phenomena. Femicide leads us back to the structures of power and

implicates the state as a responsible party, whether by commission, toleration or omission' (2008:112-113).

Femicide thus implies not only the murder of women by men because they are women but also indicates state responsibility for these murders (Sanford 2008). This can be through the commission of the actual killing, the toleration of the perpetrators' acts of violence, or omission of state responsibility to ensure the safety of female citizens.

Questions of violence and gender are not only the subject of scholarly debates, but also and perhaps even primarily to nongovernmental organizations that adopt strategies to address, and more important, to transform these issues. In the following paragraphs I will discuss the rise of these organizations and the networks they are part of and focus on how these organizations have put gender-based violence on the map.

1.3 NGOs & TANs

The rise of most nongovernmental organizations dates back to the second half of the twentieth century. After the Second World War the idea of human rights as a global issue and worthy of attention in foreign policy and international relations gained ground. A human rights movement evolved that helped to create the international human rights regime we know today. In principle this global human rights regime means that we are concerned with human rights violations wherever they occur and that borders are no obstruction to the protection of these rights (Sikkink 2004:3-7).

Cleary (1997) argues that even though the Holocaust was the catalyst that made human rights an issue in world politics, it was the spreading of democratic institutions during the third part of the twentieth century that truly gave birth to a globalized human rights movement (116-119). In part, the movement grew out of an initiative of a British lawyer, Peter Benenson. The conviction of two students in Portugal to seven years' imprisonment for toasting to freedom was cause for Benenson to start writing letters to the Portuguese government. Together with his colleagues he started a campaign drawing attention to political and religious prisoners around the world. What started as a small scale initiative quickly grew out to one of the largest nongovernmental organizations in the world: Amnesty International. The organization was founded in 1961 and by 1994 it had more than one million members, 8000 grassroots groups in 70 countries and a rapid international communication network (Cleary 1997, Panizza 1995, Amnesty International).

Human Rights Watch soon joined Amnesty International as an effective partner in addressing human rights issues. The driving force of HRW came from the Moscow Helsinki Group, a group of intellectuals that initiated discussions, published statements, letters and reports on human rights issues, often at personal risk. It served as a model for regional watch committees (Human Rights Watch). Unlike AI, HRW operates as an enterprise without a grassroots base, but focuses on wider issues. Both AI and HRW have added stability to the global human rights network (Cleary 1997, Keck and Sikkink 1999).

Keck and Sikkink (1999) refer to this kind of network as a transnational advocacy network (TAN). These networks include those actors that *'are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services'* (Ibid: 89). In order to understand the nature, effectiveness and limitations of human rights work we need to explore the connections between the several actors participating in a network. Apart from large international NGOs such as AI and HRW, usually intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States are included, but also local NGOs, exile groups, feminists, the media, foundations and churches. These TANs are driven primarily by shared values or principles and are able to mobilize information strategically. They furthermore persuade, pressurize and gain influence over powerful organizations and governments (Ibid:90-92, Sikkink 2006, Cleary 1997).

TANs most likely emerge around those issues where 1. relationships between civil society and governments are damaged or where the channels between these actors are ineffective for conflict resolution, 2. networking is believed to strengthen the missions of activists and 3. the international community pays special attention to, and opens up space for network development. It is no coincidence that the language of rights is used in this environment. Governments are both the primary guarantors and violators of rights. When rights are violated, individuals and domestic groups often have no remedies to seek help within national political and judicial arenas. They therefore look for international allies. Through transnational advocacy networks national and international activists are linked together with the purpose of influencing behaviour of states. International contacts can amplify the demands of national groups, open spaces for new issues and echo these demands back into the national arena (Keck & Sikkink 1999:92-93).

A good example of a transnational advocacy network is the one that emerged during 1994 after the uprising of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) in Mexico. It has been referred to as the transnational Zapatista solidarity network (Olesen 2005). Transnational activists who started to protest against armed confrontations in the wake of the

uprising laid the foundations for the network, which came to rise after the Mexican army's invasion of EZLN territory in February 1995. The invasion had caused the need for civilian peace camp work and human rights observation, which was organised by the network. Transnational activists furthermore supported local organizations that arranged food, cloths, medicine and school supplies for the poor in Chiapas (Olesen 2005:1-3).

The most intense period of activities of the transnational network was probably after the Acteal massacre in Chiapas in December 1997, when 45 innocent people were killed while attending church (Olesen 2005, NY Times 2007). These human rights violations and the militarization of Chiapas became of great concern to the network. Foreign presence increased enormously and a Civil Commission for Human Rights Observation was founded. In the following years the transnational solidarity network became active several times, for example in 2001 when they organised a March for Indigenous Rights. Even though the attention and activity of the network has declined over the past few years the transnational aspect of the EZLN has not gone unnoticed. Many academics have made references to the EZLN as an example of a transnational movement (Olesen 2005).

The way TANs work is similar to political groups or social movements, but they rely more on information, ideas and strategies to transform the context within which states make policies. One of their most important strategies is the construction of cognitive frames, also referred to as frame alignment (Keck and Sikkink 1999, Olesen 2005, Cleary 1997, Staudt 2008, Lang 2009). By framing issues, network members seek to bring these issues to the public agenda. Activists use all kinds of methods to frame issues, from testimonies to popular art and protest marches. For a transnational framing process to be successful the frame has to meet certain conditions. First, social and cultural beliefs of recipients have to be resonated. Second, the frame must define a problem and propose its solution. Third, frames are more successful when they derive from a master frame, for example the democratic ideas that came up at the end of the Cold War have been a master frame for the construction of transnational frames, the political opportunities that were created by the end of the Cold War. Finally, a successful frame must have empirical credibility and resonance with the everyday experiences of the persons affected (Olesen 2005). Contemporary communication technologies such as Internet are vital resources in these transnational framing processes.

The framing issues can be used by all sorts of transnational advocacy networks, regardless of their focus. One of the issues that has become a main focus of TANs over the past years is women's rights. Gender equality advocates have become one of the most vibrant participants in the transnational advocacy arena. Especially during the democratic transition

of several states, women's organizations have grown increasingly vocal in their claims that democratization should include gender-based issues in public and private life (Friedman 2005). The next paragraph will elaborate on these women's organizations and the rights they fought for, especially in relation to violence against women.

1.4 Women's Transnational Advocacy Networks

Since the 1980s women's TANs are among the most active networks, even though they are less publicly visible than TANs focusing on the environment, labor standards or trade. Especially after the Beijing conference in 1995 women's NGOs increased and institutionalized transnational co-operations in areas such as health and reproduction, environment, trade and violence against women (Lang 2009).

By the late 1980s violence against women had become a strategic point of activists in raising international awareness. Despite its importance at the local level, the issue was previously absent from policy and funding agendas at the international level. The strategy women's groups adopted to gain credibility and funding for violence-related projects was demonstrating the link between gender-based violence and issues already on the international agenda, such as human rights, health, international development and AIDS prevention (Schmidt Camacho 2005). One of the most successful efforts has been the campaign of framing gender-based violence as an abuse of human rights. Another fruitful effort has been to link health abuse with development concerns, for example unwanted pregnancies and AIDS with women's participation in development projects (Heise 1995).

Despite the existence of many international instruments that guarantee all individuals the right to life, bodily integrity and security, mainstream human rights discourse has for a long time failed to recognize rape and domestic violence as abuses of women's rights. This has mainly to do with the reluctance to take women's issues seriously and with the distinction between abuses in the public and private sphere, which has already been mentioned.

In the late 1980s women came together to protest the failure of the human rights community to address gender-based violence. The Campaign for Women's Human Rights was an international effort of more than 1000 women's groups to get the United Nations to integrate gender into the human rights discourse. The campaign included major initiatives to redefine the human rights law to include rape and domestic violence. In 1993 a petition with over 500.000 signatures was presented at the Second World Conference on Human Rights in

Vienna, demanding that violence was recognized as an abuse of women's rights. This finally led to the signing of the Convention of Belém do Pará in 1994, which offers abused women recourse to the Inter American Court of Justice (Heise 1995, OAS 1994).

The reframing of gender-based violence as a human rights issue offers several advantages. For example the UN has appointed a special rapporteur on violence against women, who is charged with investigating and reporting gender-based violence worldwide (UN 2009). Large NGOs have also implemented women's programs to undertake field missions designed to document violence against women². Another advantage is the access to the power of 'rights' language, new tools and venues including international law and courts, new sanctions such as withdrawal of trade rights and access to the UN machinery.

The human rights frame has, however, not been able to offer remedies for victims or insights for prevention. Besides, evidence was emerging of links between abuse and women's well-being, as well as their ability to participate in social and economic development. As a result, in the late 1980s a small group of activists started to frame violence as a public health and international development issue. This strategy offered opportunities but also risks (Heise 1995). For example, it offered extensive experience in research and designing interventions but increased the danger of medicalizing a social and political issue when framing it as a health issue. This can be avoided by focusing on a public health perspective, such as prevention and behavior change rather than treatment and cure. Major successes have been achieved by advocates who have engaged in the health and development community. As a result of women's lobbying, organizations such as the World Health Organization, its daughter organization the Pan American Health Organization and the World Bank have addressed impacts of gender-based violence on health (WHO 2005, World Bank 1993, PAHO 1999, Heise 1995).

1.5 Conclusion

After having discussed the key concepts of this study, and before putting them in the context of Mexico, a brief conclusion is in place. I began this chapter with an introduction about the theoretical debate about the concept of violence and gender-based violence in particular. This concept has been defined and redefined over the past years by intergovernmental organizations. In 1995 at the United Nations' Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing an

² See for example: Amnesty International, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/page.do?id=1011012> and Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/en/category/topic/women>

influential definition of gender-based violence was formulated, which includes not only the act of violence itself but also the threat thereof.

Feminists have also had a great stake in defining the concept of gender-based violence. They have particularly tried to include private forms of violence (i.e. domestic violence) in the definition of gender-based violence, as opposed to only public forms of violence. Moreover they have been active in defining the most extreme form of violence against women: femicide or feminicide. Whereas the former constitutes the murder of women with a misogynist motive, the latter also includes state responsibility and impunity.

Gender-based violence has also attracted attention from non-governmental organizations. They have aligned with feminists, academics, intergovernmental organizations, churches and other institutes in a transnational advocacy network (TAN). TANs focus on addressing human rights issues and search to influence the behavior of states. The most important strategy they use to achieve this end is through constructing cognitive frames.

Gender-based violence has been a subject of TANs attention as of the 1980s. One of the most successful efforts of activists to raise international awareness about violence against women, has been to frame it as a human rights issue. It has provided activists with several tools, such as the access to the 'language of rights' to make claims. Besides the human rights frame, violence against women has also been framed as a health issue and as an international development problem. Both the human rights and health frame have resulted in great successes for advocates of women's issues.

2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN MEXICO

In this chapter I will focus on the first research question of this thesis which is: ‘*What are the main features of gender-based violence in Mexico?*’ To be able to answer this question I will examine the phenomenon of violence against women from the perspective of NGOs and activists. I will take a look at how they identify the problem, which general characteristics of violence against women can be distinguished and discuss in more detail the specific characteristics of the situation in the states of Estado de México, Jalisco and Morelos. Before I will turn to this I will give a short historical overview of the evolution of violence against women and activism in Mexico.

2.1 Historical perspective

The problem of violence against women in Mexico can be considered a historical problem which was invisible for many years. Especially violence committed in the private sphere wasn’t considered a social problem until recently. Violence committed in the public sphere became more visible during the 1990s when feminicides started to haunt the border city of Juárez.

As of 1993 the bodies of young women started to turn up dead in and around the city of Juárez. These women had been killed and their corpses demonstrated grave forms of violence, including torture, sexual abuse and mutilation. The corpses were mostly found in public places such as garbage dumps, parking lots, by the side of the road or in the desert surrounding the city. Most of the victims were young women, some even minors, with similar physical appearances such as a slender figure and long dark hair. They principally came from a lower socio-economic background and worked in the *maquiladora* industry (Wright 2006, Nathan 1999, WOLA 2007a). According to Amnesty International almost 400 women have been killed in a period of ten years time in the state of Chihuahua and many others have disappeared (AI 2003). In practically all these cases the motive was unclear and the aggressors remained unidentified.

From the moment relatives found out their daughter, sister or mother had gone missing they reported the disappearance and demanded proper investigations. However, instead of conducting investigations, the authorities seemed to ignore the problem and blame the victim. Stereotypes against women were brought forward to explain the disappearance and later when

the victim's body was found, also to explain the violence the woman had become victim of. It happened because she wore a short skirt, or because she went out at night, or because she was a prostitute working in a nightclub (Wright 2011). The result of these justifications was that no proper investigations were conducted and impunity started to reign.

It is at this point that the mothers who demanded justice for the killing of their daughters started to organize³. They were quickly joined by human rights organizations, feminists and other activists who made it their job to document cases, make the problem visible and denounce the violence in Ciudad Juárez internationally, for example at the United Nations and the Inter American Commission of Human Rights. Several national organizations together formed the *Observatorio Femicidio para Ciudad Juárez* in 2004. The *Observatorio* principally focused on monitoring the situation in Ciudad Juárez.

However, little by little similar levels of violence started to emerge in other states of the republic. This deeply worried the *Observatorio* and Marcela Lagarde, feminist and then a PRD federal deputy, who decided to conduct a study about the problem on a national level and present a diagnostic. This led to the creation of a new law in 2007, which I will discuss in the next paragraph. It also encouraged the formation of a national *Observatorio* the same year, the *Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio (OCNF)*, which incorporates until now 49 organizations in 19 states of the republic that all dedicate part of their work to documenting and monitoring cases of femicide on a national level or in their specific federal entity.

2.2 Defining violence against women

After Marcela Lagarde's analysis demonstrated that violence against women was a national problem, a bill was presented to the Mexican Congress to prevent, sanction and eradicate all forms of violence against women. In February 2007, Congress passed this new law called the *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia (Ley General de Acceso* in short). This law is used by many Mexican non governmental organizations and activists that focus on women's rights and forms one of the most important grounds for their work. It defines violence against women as follows:

³ See for example *Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas*, <http://www.justiciaparanuestrashijas.org/>

‘Cualquier acción u omisión, basada en su género, que les cause daño o sufrimiento psicológico, físico, patrimonial, económico, sexual o la muerte tanto en el ámbito privado como en el público’ (Ley General de Acceso 2007, Art. 5, sub IV).

The law distinguishes several types of violence against women: psychological violence, physical violence, patrimonial violence, economical violence and sexual violence. Psychological violence is considered to be any act or omission that can hurt a woman’s psychological stability, such as humiliation, insults, negligence, abandonment, jealousy and threats and result in depression, isolation, devaluation of a woman’s self esteem or even suicide. Physical violence includes every act that inflicts no accidental damage by the use of physical force or some kind of weapon or object that can cause internal and/or external lesions. Patrimonial violence represents any act or omission that affects the victim’s survival such as the transformation, destruction or withdrawal of objects, personal documents, patrimonial rights or damage caused to the common or private goods of the victim. Economic violence is every act or omission that affects economic survival of the victim, for example the control of income but also receiving less salary for the same type of work within the same organization. Finally, sexual violence is every act that degrades or hurts the body and/or sexuality of the victim and is thus considered an assault against the woman’s bodily integrity, dignity and liberty (Ibid 2007: Art. 6, sub I-IV).

The law furthermore distinguishes several spheres in which the violence can take place. The first is domestic violence, which comprises any act of abuse of power inside or outside the home committed by a relative or (ex) partner. The second is violence within the labor sphere or at school, which includes abuse of power, independently from the hierarchical relationship, for example sexual assault. The third is community violence, which consists of any act, individual or collective, that results in discrimination, marginalization or exclusion of the victim from the public sphere. A fourth sphere of violence is institutional violence, which involves any act or omission committed by public servants that are discriminating or form an obstacle for women to call upon their rights, have access to justice or profit from public policies (Ibid 2007: Art. 10-20).

Activists also developed a new typology of the most extreme expression of violence against women, femicide. This typology has been developed by academic and feminist Julia Monárrez in her research on the feminicides in Ciudad Juárez during the period 1993 until 2005 (OCNF 2010). The *Ley General de Acceso* mentions femicidal violence, but does not specify it. Monárrez distinguishes five categories: intimate femicide, family femicide,

infant femicide, systemic sexual femicide and femicide due to stigmatized occupations. Intimate femicide is femicide committed by a man with whom the victim had an intimate relationship. Family femicide and infant femicide are considered subcategories of intimate femicide and are respectively committed by a relative and directed against a minor. Systemic sexual femicide is characterized for its misogynic elements such as sexual abuse, torture, mutilation and the dumping of the body in public places and the last category focuses on women who become victims of femicide because they fulfill stigmatized jobs such as prostitutes and dancers in night clubs.

In addition, NGOs and activists also use other national and state level laws to define violence against women, such as the *Ley General de Igualdad* and the specifications of the *Ley General de Acceso* at the state level. Moreover, they employ several international instruments such as the Convention of Belém do Para, mentioned in a previous chapter, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.

2.3 General characteristics

An important characteristic of the debate about violence against women in Mexico is the lack of available data. The first place to look for such data would be the statistical institute of the government. In the case of Mexico the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (INEGI) carried out a national household survey, the *Encuesta Nacional sobre la Dinámica de las Relaciones en los Hogares* (ENDIREH) in 2003 and 2006. One of the most important results of the survey conducted in 2006 is that it demonstrated that 67 % of the women of 15 years and older had suffered violence some time in their lives (INEGI 2007). Although this astronomical number calls for further investigation, INEGI has not conducted any more recent research on this specific topic. The more recent socio- demographic data provided by INEGI on its website only focuses on mortality rates.

This is exactly the problem NGOs and activists encounter; there are hardly official data available that can give insight into the size and precise nature of the problem of violence against women. The responsible authorities on either federal or state level mostly do not keep any records, very few cases are documented and the data that is available is not always accurate or complete. All this results in the fact that until today no national databases for cases

of violence against women exist, even though the *Ley General de Acceso* of 2007 pointed to the need.

To make up for the state's unwillingness or incapacity, NGOs and activists themselves have undertaken various attempts to document and monitor cases to make the problem more visible. The OCNF has published two reports on femicide over the periods 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. These reports give some insight into the major characteristics of the problem. It should, however, be emphasized that one of the sources that provided data to make these analyses are the same governmental institutions that fail to document cases properly. This of course affects the reliability of the data. It will become clear that several of the characteristics of the victims are unknown in a number of cases, which supports the activists' complaints about the lack of data. Moreover, the data focus only on femicides, the gravest expression of violence against women and excludes other types of violence. Also, data have not been gathered about all Mexican states, but about 11 states of the republic for the period January 2007-June 2008 and 13 for the period January 2009-June 2010. In the next two paragraphs I will examine some of the characteristics of femicidal violence found in these reports. In the first paragraph I will focus on the victims and aggressors of femicides and in the second I will take a look at the geographical distribution of fatal violence against women.

2.3.1 *The victims and aggressors*

In the period between 1 January 2007 and 31 July 2008 a total number of 1014 femicides of women were registered by the OCNF. These data corresponded to only 13 of the 32 Mexican states. As the table below demonstrates, of the total amount of victimized women the majority, almost 43 %, was between 21 and 40 years of age (see Table 1).

Table 1. AGE OF GIRLS AND WOMEN ASSASSINATED IN THE THREE REGIONS UNDER STUDY IN THE PERIOD JANUARY 2007-JULY 2008

Age	North	Centre and Bajío region	South	Total	Percentage
0-10	23	71	0	94	9.27
11-20	34	102	4	140	13.8
21-30	63	182	8	253	24.94
31-40	64	114	2	180	17.75
41-50	29	70	4	103	10.15

51-60	10	43	0	53	5.22
61-70	5	31	1	37	3.64
71-80	3	24	1	28	2.76
81-90	2	10	2	14	1.38
Without specification	48	35	30	112	11.04
Total	281	681	52	1014	100

Source: OCNF 2008

Furthermore 13 % of the women were married and 12 % was single. As for their occupation, 16 % was housewife, 12 % were students and minors without an occupation and 22 % was somehow employed (See Table 2).

Table 2. OCCUPATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN ASSASINATED IN THE THREE REGIONS IN THE PERIOD JANUARY 2007-JULY 2008

Occupation	North	Centre and Bajío region	South	Total	Percentage
Housewife	26	125	11	162	16
Student	13	47	2	62	6,11
Minor	14	46	0	60	5,91
Employed	54	143	9	206	20,26
Unemployed	1	3	0	4	0,39
Retired	0	9	0	9	0,88
Unknown	173	308	30	511	50,39
TOTAL	281	681	52	1014	100

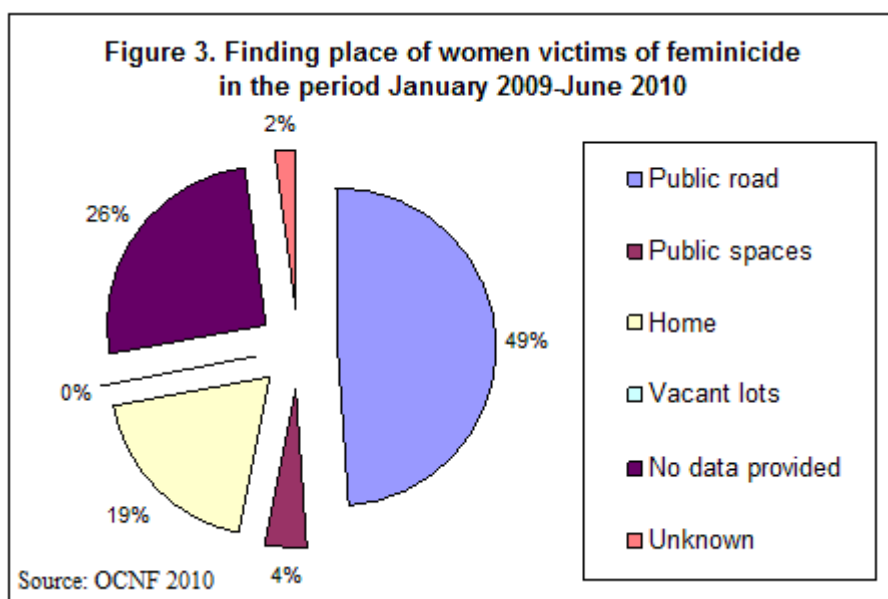
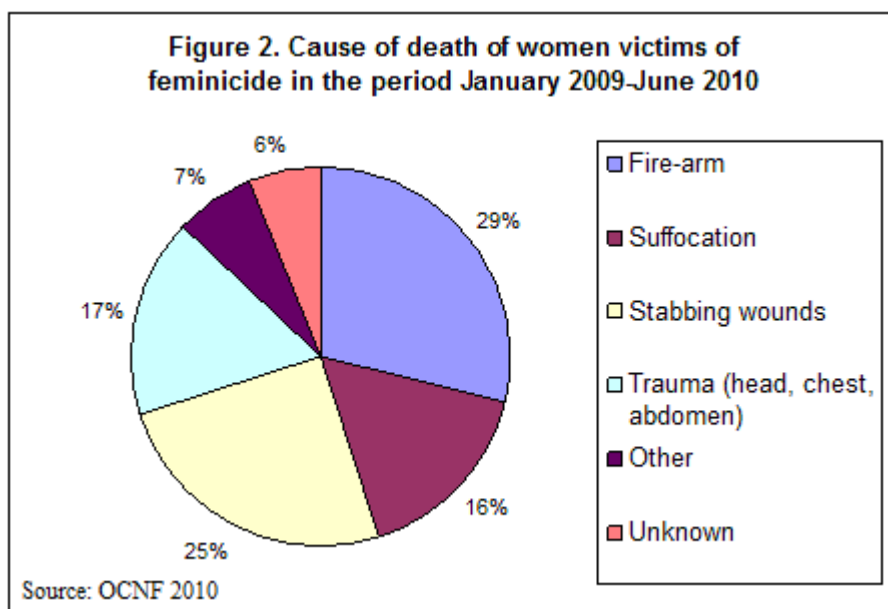
Source: OCNF 2008

Besides, the report mentions that a quarter of the women died through gunfire, most bodies were found in public spaces and one out of every five women was murdered by an intimate partner (spouse, boyfriend etc.). What furthermore becomes clear from these data is that in many cases neither the victims nor the aggressors could be identified (OCNF 2008).

Between January 2009 and June 2010 the OCNF registered 890 feminicides in 11 states of the republic⁴. Again the majority of the victims, over 58 %, were between 21 and 40 years of age. As for the occupation, almost 27 % of them were housewives and 36 % conducted activities outside the home, either work or study. More than half of these 890 women died due to excessive use of physical force and another 29 % due to gun fire (See figure 2). Besides, the bodies of every 5 out of 10 victims were found in either public spaces

⁴ Luz Estrada, coordinator of the OCNF, mentioned that the number of women who were violently assassinated reached 1400 for the year 2010. Since I have no further information about the characteristics of these murders I will focus on the data collected in the period between January 2009 and June 2010.

or by the side of the road (See figure 3). This may however be higher since in over 25% of the cases the authorities denied the OCNF access to this kind of information. Finally, in 20 % of the cases the victim was murdered by a known assailant. The civil status of the victims was not provided for this period (OCNF 2010).



As far as the assailants are concerned, no statistical data are available. Activists only make the distinction between aggressors that are known (*conocidos*) and those who are unknown (*desconocidos*) to the victim. According to the different types of violence, the perpetrator has a different relationship to the victim. When talking of domestic violence the perpetrators are (ex) husbands, boyfriends, lovers, but also brothers, fathers and grandfathers. In case of violence that takes place at work or school the perpetrator can be a superior, colleague,

teacher or classmate. In the community it can be a neighbour or various neighbours and so on and so forth. In other words, all assailants are *conocidos* of the victim. These kinds of feminicides are all called *feminicidios íntimos*, referring to the relationship that exists between the victim and the murderer.

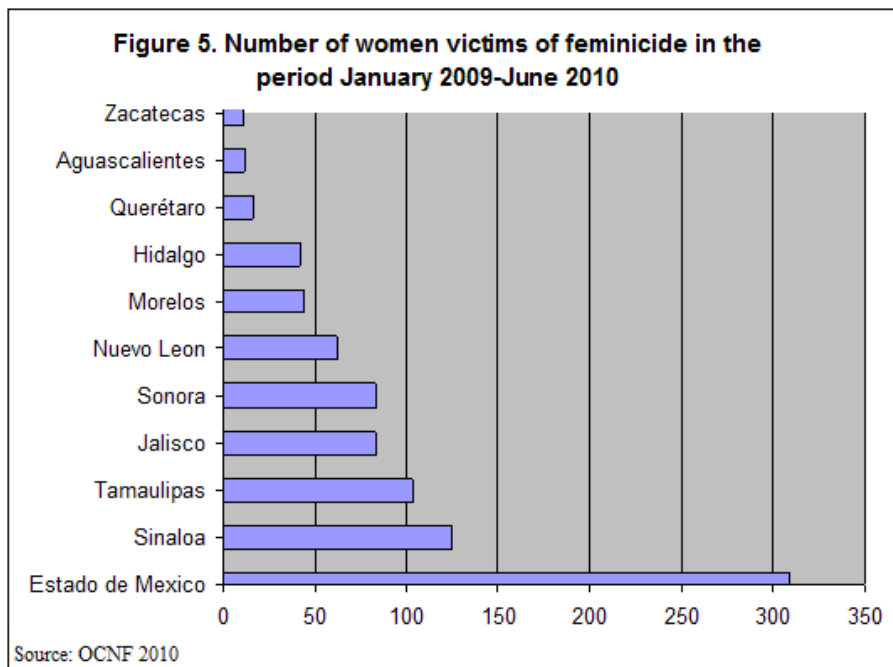
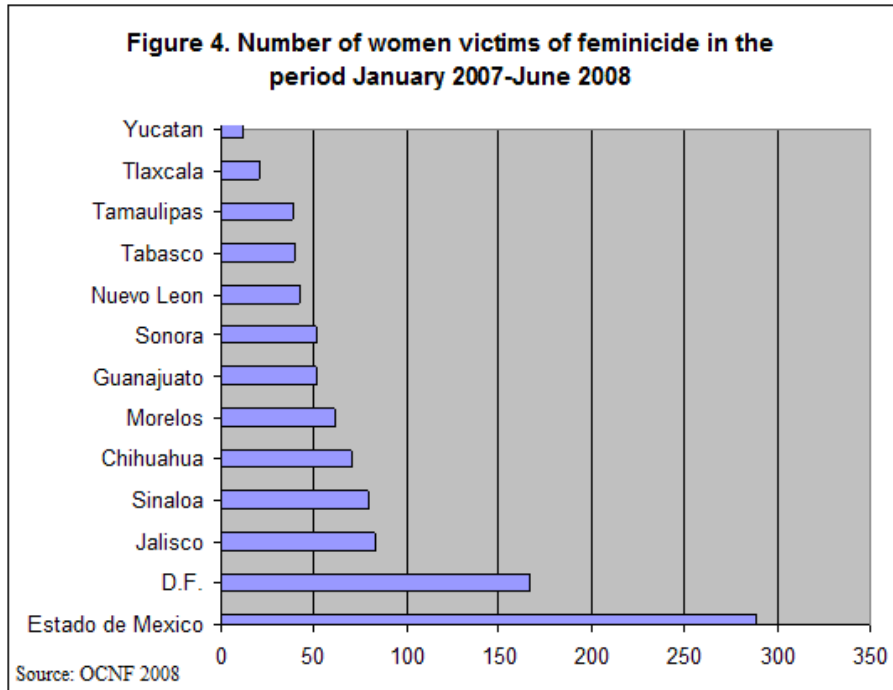
Nevertheless, there are others responsible for the violence committed against women. In some cases of femicide there appears to be no relationship between the victim and the murderer, the *desconocidos*. These kind of feminicides are called *feminicidios sexual sistémicos* and consist of the violent assassinations of women and girls who were also victims of torture, abuse, mutilation or other grave forms of violence and whose bodies have been dumped in public places. The typical example of these types of feminicides are of course the murders in Ciudad Juárez, but as will become clear in the next paragraph it occurs more widely.

2.3.2 Geographical location

For the first OCNF report data about feminicides that occurred in the period between 1 January 2007 and 31 July 2008 could be gathered in 13 states of the republic. Whether the useful data could be collected in a state or not depended mostly on the willingness of authorities to provide them and the presence of OCNF organizations in that region. Also sometimes states provided data with too less variables to distinguish feminicides from homicides and could therefore not be included in this analysis. For this report the 13 states were divided in three regions, the North, the Center and Bajío region and the South (see table 1 and 2). The northern region incorporates the states of Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, Sonora and Nuevo Leon. The center and Bajío region is comprised of the states Estado de México, Distrito Federal, Tlaxcala, Morelos, Guanajuato and Jalisco. The southern region only includes the states of Yucatán and Tabasco.

When taking a closer look at the geographical distribution of feminicides in the country in the period under investigation the North registered 281 feminicides, the Center and Bajío region registered a total amount of 681 feminicides and the South registered 52 feminicides (see table 1 and 2). The most remarkable fact is that of these total amounts of feminicides, the highest number per state was not found in Chihuahua, the state where Ciudad Juárez is located, or any other of the northern states for that matter. The state with the highest number of feminicides registered for this period was the Estado de México with 289 feminicides, followed by the Federal District (176) and Jalisco (83) (See figure 4). In the

period between January 2009 and June 2010 feminicides have been registered in 11 states of the republic. This time the states that provided sufficient data were: Estado de México, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, Jalisco, Sonora, Nuevo Leon, Morelos, Hidalgo, Querétaro, Aguascalientes and Zacatecas. Again results demonstrated that far the highest number of feminicides was found in Estado de México (see figure 5).



Due to the lack of research the reasons behind these high levels of feminicides in the Estado de México remain unknown. However, each state does have its specific characteristics which may influence the number and type of feminicides that take place within these territories. In the next paragraph I will take a closer look at some specific characteristics of the problem in the states Estado de México, Jalisco and Morelos.

2.4 Specific characteristics in three states

2.4.1 Estado de Mexico



The Estado de México is the most populated state in the republic with over 15 million inhabitants. It occupies the second place in population density in the country with 679 inhabitants per square kilometre in 2010. Most of the inhabitants live in the metropolitan area surrounding the Federal District, with Ecatepec as the most populated city (INEGI 2011).

During my fieldwork I visited the organization *Visión Mundial* in Ecatepec and I talked with Veronica Abreu, the spokeswoman of this organization.⁵ *Visión Mundial* works at the community level with women and children who have become victims of violence, mostly domestic violence, and focuses on the 8 poorest *colonias* in Ecatepec. *Visión Mundial* joined the OCNF in 2009 and continues to be the only organization in this alliance in Estado de México. The organization has a catholic vision and seeks to improve the life of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society such as children and women. The women that go to *Visión Mundial* for help are neglected by authorities and/or are unaware of the possibilities they have or the institutions they can go to.

⁵ Interview with Veronica Abreu, Mexico City, 20 April 2011.

Moreover, governmental institutions that attend to women's needs, such as the *Centro de Atención a la Mujer en Violencia Intrafamiliar* (CAMVIF) are very few and mostly located in the cities such as Ecatepec. This leaves women in rural areas with no other option than to travel to the city in search for help. However, these women have very few economic resources and public transport is expensive for them. This results in the fact that women in Estado de México experience great difficulty in finding help when they have become victims of violence. It is not uncommon these women continue to live in the same circle of violence at home, that may eventually result in femicide.

Besides these intimate femicides, the state of Mexico is home to high numbers of sexual systemic femicides. The victims of these crimes are mostly unidentified as are their killers. Luz Estrada from *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir* and coordinator of the OCNF mentioned that over the past 5 years over 500 women have died in this state whose bodies have not been identified.⁶ This may have something to do with this state being a transit zone for migrants. Women coming from poor areas in the country or from Central American countries travel to the capital Mexico City in search of work. These women are unknown to the local authorities, are not registered and are very vulnerable. Luz mentions that similar patterns of violence become visible in Estado de México as in other migratory transit zones such as the border states in the North and also in the southern state of Chiapas. There appears to exist a relationship between migration patterns and the incidence and geographical location of femicides.

2.4.2 Jalisco



⁶ Interview with Luz Estrada, Mexico City, 14 April 2011.

According to Guadalupe Ramos Ponche, feminist and spokeswoman of the *Comité de America Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer* (CLADEM), another organization that forms part of the OCNF, the state of Jalisco occupies the first place in violence against women that does not result in femicide on a national level.⁷ The ENDIREH survey of 2006 demonstrated that the national percentage of women of 15 years and older who had suffered violence in their lives reached 67%, whereas in the state of Jalisco 78.5% of the women had suffered violence some time in life. More than half of the women in the survey declared that the most frequent form of violence they suffered was exercised by their (ex) partner. Guadalupe mentioned that also in cases of femicide the state of Jalisco occupies a high ranking at the national level. In 2010 81 women became victims of femicide and in 2011 the number was expected to surpass this amount as by the time of our interview in May 34 femicides had already been registered.

Guadalupe investigated femicides in the state of Jalisco in the period between 1997-2007 but she continues to document cases as part of her work for CLADEM. In her research project she has been able to establish that around 50 % of the femicides in Jalisco can be classified as intimate femicides and the other 50 % as systemic sexual femicides. She also discovered that most of the femicides took place in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, the capital of the state Jalisco. With almost 6 million inhabitants it is the second largest city in the country. The rapid growth of the city over the past years and the presence of organized crime have augmented the levels of insecurity, according to Guadalupe.

Another characteristic of the state of Jalisco Guadalupe mentions is the *machismo* culture that has a very strong presence in this part of the country. Jalisco has always been a very traditional state and it has a government that is particularly conservative. According to Guadalupe masculinity is often interpreted in Jalisco as a fixed ideal of how a man should be. For example, a man should be very virile, dominant and brave and as the head of the family he should not allow a woman to tell him what to do. As a result, Guadalupe says, men believe they have the right to exercise control over a woman's life, which, according to her, has resulted in more violence.

⁷ Interview with Guadalupe Ramos Ponche, Guadalajara, 4 May 2011.

2.4.3 Morelos



After the creation of the *Ley General de Acceso* and the establishment of the OCNF in 2007, activists in the state of Morelos were able to collect sufficient funds to establish an observatorio of their own, which focused not only on feminicides but on gender-based violence in general. Their findings demonstrate that the predominant sphere in which the violence takes place in the state of Morelos was at home. This violence is not only exercised by fathers, but also by brothers, grandfathers, uncles, sometimes even by the mother. Violence not only includes physical violence but also other types of violence, such as psychological or patrimonial violence.

Moreover, activists encountered a pattern of how women were becoming victimized multiple times. Patricia Bedolla, former NGO activist and nowadays working for the *Comisión de Equidad de Género* of the congress of the state of Morelos, explains strikingly how the several spheres of violence correlate:

'[...] empezamos a encontrar esta violencia que mayormente está al interior de la familia [y que las mujeres van padeciendo desde pequeñas, desde que ellas tienen el cargo del trabajo de la casa, o tienen que salir a trabajar, o tienen que dejar la escuela.] ¿Y por qué no podemos encontrar violencia, por decirlo así, comunitaria? Porque es una mujer que no ha salido de su familia. Es una mujer que no ha decidido romper con la violencia y decir: 'Me voy'. Si la mujer rompe con la familia y dice: 'Me voy', la siguiente violencia es comunitaria. 'Es una mala hija, es una mala madre', ¿no? [...] O esta mujer que decide a denunciar, y dice: 'Voy a denunciar a mi padre, porque me ha golpeado desde los 8 años, o abusó sexualmente de mí', [...] esa mujer que decide esto, no solamente tiene una violencia evidentemente familiar, sino además va encontrar la violencia institucional. '¿Si desde los 8 años, porque decidió venir hasta ahora? No pues ya no.' [...] Y lo malo es

*que ahora está peor, ya denunció, no encontró respuesta de la autoridad y ya no puede regresar a su casa y menos a la calle donde vivía. Ahora va tener que irse de ahí.*⁸

The problematic situation that Patricia describes, results in that women no longer denounce the violence they suffer at home out of fear for more violence. This may create a large dark number of violence. Moreover, Patricia mentions, femicide may be the result of this problem, since the woman feels she has nowhere else to go and continues to live in violence at home, which one day may cause her death. She says: *'violencia feminicida termina en una confusión que va de la mano entre la violencia familiar y la violencia institucional'*.

The state of Morelos has witnessed an increase in femicides since 2006 when they started documenting them. In this year the number reached 20 and it augmented until 57 by the year 2010. For Morelos, the third smallest state in the country with only 1.7 million inhabitants, this is a high number. In incidence Morelos belongs to the top of the list of states with most femicidal violence in the country. In fact, in 2009 they occupied the first place of the 13 states investigated by the OCNF.

As elsewhere, the explanation for these high numbers remains unclear. Morelos is not a frontier state, but does have a lot of transit, since it is situated between the federal district and Acapulco. This has brought Morelos tourists, but also organized crime. Over the past years the state of Morelos has witnessed increasing levels of drug-related violence. Criminal groups fight over the control of drug routes that lead from entry points such as Acapulco towards the United States. Besides, the capital of Cuernavaca has long been home to one of Mexico's largest drug kingpins, Arturo Beltran Leyva, who was killed by government forces in December 2009.⁹ In the next chapter I will further discuss the panorama of organized crime that has developed over the last years in Mexico and became the government's top priority since 2006.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on violence against women from the perspective of NGOs and activists and discussed how violence against women in Mexico became an important topic of activists' work, how activists define violence and which characteristics of violence against

⁸ Interview with Patricia Bedolla, Cuernavaca, 28 April 2011.

⁹ See The Guardian, 12 January 2010, 'Arturo Beltran Leyva obituary', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/12/arturo-beltran-leyva-obituary>, visited on 24-08-2011

women they have found, both on a general level and more specifically for the states of Mexico, Jalisco and Morelos.

NGOs and activists first started to focus on violence against women after they discovered that the murders of young women in Ciudad Juárez during the 1990s were not investigated properly and ended up in impunity, mostly because authorities justified the violence and blamed the victims. Several activists joined the mothers of the victims as they sought justice for these crimes. They formed a network and started to document cases, first in Ciudad Juárez but later on a national level to make the problem become more visible.

With their work they contributed to the development of the *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia* in 2007 that distinguishes between psychological, physical, sexual, economical and patrimonial violence and identifies different spheres in which the violence can take place, such as at home or within the community. Activists use this law as a basis for their work. They also identify femicide according to different types, such as intimate femicide or systemic sexual femicide.

The documenting of cases by activists has made it possible to examine the characteristics of femicide. It shows that since they started documenting in 2007 most feminicides have occurred in the state of Mexico, whereas the problem during the 1990s specifically focused on the border city of Juárez in the state Chihuahua. Other characteristics that activists were able to determine are that most victims are between 21 and 40 years of age and most of them conduct activities outside the home. They mostly died as a result of excessive use of physical force or gunfire and their bodies were often found in public places. Mostly the perpetrators of these crimes are unknown to the victims. These characteristics point in many cases to systemic sexual feminicides.

Especially in the state of Mexico many unidentified women have become victims of these so called systemic sexual feminicides. It is assumed that these women are migrants who come to Mexico City or are on their way to the North: the state of Mexico is a transit zone for migrants. The state of Morelos is a transit zone for tourists and drug traffickers and also witnesses relatively high levels of feminicides. The state of Jalisco on the other hand is characterized for its high levels of domestic violence, which local activists generally attribute to cultural reasons.

3. MEXICO'S CURRENT SECURITY CRISIS

In this chapter I will focus on the second research sub-question of this thesis which is: '*What are the main features of the current security crisis in Mexico (2006-present)?*' To be able to understand the dynamics of this crisis and discuss its characteristics I will first analyze the development of the drug trade in Mexico, which is important as it has formed the basis of the crisis and demonstrates the government's position. Subsequently I will take a closer look at how the security crisis evolved and discuss the elements that characterize it. I will finish this chapter with an overview of the current most important criminal organizations that are involved in the security crisis.

3.1 The drug trade in Mexico

Mexican involvement in drug production and traffic to the United States goes back to the 19th century. Both marijuana and poppy cultivation have historically been present in the northern states of Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua and Durango (WOLA 2007b). The production and export of opiates was long time dominated by Chinese immigrants, but after they were persecuted and their properties were confiscated, Mexicans have taken over the domestic drug cultivation and export. The beneficiaries were mostly influential families from the northern Mexican states, for example the Herrera family in Durango, who largely dominated the cultivation, production and export of marijuana and opiates in entire regions of the country (Toro 1995, Lupsha 1991, Astorga 2000).

These drug trafficking families were able to become so powerful due to the protection of the political elite, who represented the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the party that has dominated Mexican politics for over 70 years. It used a system of patronage to control the political opposition and create the ruling economic and social classes. This included establishing patron-client relationships with drug traffickers. In return for granting drug traffickers the control of drug traffic in certain areas, they had to pay a 'license' from local politicians (Lupsha 1991, Astorga 2000, Pimentel 2000).

By the end of the 1940s the patron-client relationships between the PRI and drug traffickers became more solidified with the establishment of the Federal Security Directorate (DFS) (Astorga 2000, Lupsha 1991). The purpose of this institute was to investigate matters of national security. However, from the beginning DFS had connections to drug traffickers,

especially its violent division the White Brigade was known for involvement in criminal activities (Lupsha 1991, Pimentel 2000).

During the 1960s and 1970s the marihuana and heroin business started to grow drastically as a result of the increased consumption of drugs in the U.S. The true boost however came during the 1980s with the arrival of Colombian cocaine, which used to travel to Florida via de Caribbean, but due to successful U.S. interdiction campaigns in Florida was now rerouted through Central America and Mexico (Toro 1995, Gootenberg 2010). Mexico quickly grew out to be a major transfer point for cocaine destined for the U.S. By the mid 1980s 30 percent of all the cocaine reaching the U.S. was believed to pass through Mexico. As a result powerful drug trafficking organizations started to emerge in Mexico.

Instead of fighting these organizations, Mexican law enforcement authorities and specifically DFS, sought to close deals with the traffickers to share the profits and keep the levels of violence acceptable (Velasco 2005). However, due to the growing cocaine business the drug trafficking organizations became more powerful and tensions started to rise both in the underworld and with the state. When in 1985 DEA agent Enrique Camarena Salazar and his pilot were kidnapped, tortured and murdered by members of the Guadalajara Cartel under protection of the DFS, U.S. government increased its political pressure on the Mexican government. As a result, the Mexican government broke up the narco-pact and abolished DFS. Moreover, illegal drugs became defined as a national security problem and militarization of the war against drugs increased (Astorga 2005, Velasco 2005).

During the 1990s the context changed greatly. As the PRI's hegemony started to fall apart and the state became no longer able to impose the rule of law, the drug organizations grew. This was mainly due to the booming cocaine business and the collapse of the Colombian Medellin and Cali cartels. Moreover, the levels of violence could no longer be kept under control and increased drastically, as the tacit understandings between the PRI and the drug traffickers had started to erode (Williams 2009, Velasco 2005, Lupsha 1991, Shirk 2010, Gootenberg 2010). Both inter- and intra-cartel fighting over power and territory augmented the violence in the country.

In addition, as the drug trafficking organizations grew bigger and more powerful, they became more professional and adopted a more sophisticated operational structure. The growing demand for cocaine from the U.S. implied larger operations and more money, but also more risks involved. To protect their business, cartels developed increasingly militarized enforcement strategies and created paramilitary branches. This drastically increased the levels

of violence during the 1990s (Loyola 2009, O'Neill 2009, CRS 2009, WOLA 2007b, Williams 2009).

With the start of the new millennium in the year 2000 the end had come to 70 years of one party rule by the PRI as Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) was chosen president. Fox took on a much more repressive strategy in addressing drug trafficking organizations than his predecessors, by making public security into one of its top priorities. He raised the military's involvement in combating drug traffic and improved cooperation with the U.S. Moreover, several efforts were adopted to purge law enforcement agencies of corruption, such as the abolishment of the corrupt Federal Judicial Police and replacement with the Federal Investigative Agency (AFI) (WOLA 2007b:5). However, the transition towards democratization had increased the Congress' influence in legislation processes, which slowed down judicial and police reforms. Besides, conflicts emerged between the different levels of government which regularly belonged to different parties and sometimes refused to cooperate with each other (O'Neill 2009).

In the meantime the drug trafficking organizations took advantage of the political opening and ended what was left of their relationship to the government to gain autonomy. Instead of closing deals they now started to buy off and intimidate authorities to ensure their trade. They also diversified their merchandise by stepping in to the market of methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs. Besides, they extended their production chain to other South American countries such as Peru and Bolivia and expanded their distribution area towards Europe (O'Neill 2009). By the end of Fox' administration, several drug trafficking organizations had been able to become increasingly powerful and sophisticated and promised to be difficult to challenge.

3.2 The security crisis

In December 2006 Felipe Calderón, Fox's fellow *PANista*, became president and made combating Mexico's major drug trafficking organizations a center piece of his policy. Shortly after his inauguration he launched a quick and massive operation against the drug cartels, deploying over 6,500 soldiers and federal police agents to his home state Michoacán, the first of many states to receive military troops (Grayson 2010). By 2009 around 45,000 troops and another 5,000 federal police officers were stationed in the border region and other states witnessing drug-related violence (CRS 2009, O'Neill 2009).

As a result, drug interdiction efforts have been more successful, several leaders and operators of the major drug trafficking organizations have been arrested and extradited to the U.S., large sums of money and arms have been seized and several hectares of marijuana and poppy have been eradicated (WOLA 2007b). Nevertheless, the price Mexico paid for these successes is very high. Drugs still flow through the country, human rights abuses have increased and the overall levels of violence have augmented tremendously. Besides inter- and intra-cartel violence, the state with its military and police forces has become part of the violence, raising its levels to extraordinary heights (CRS 2009, Grayson 2010).

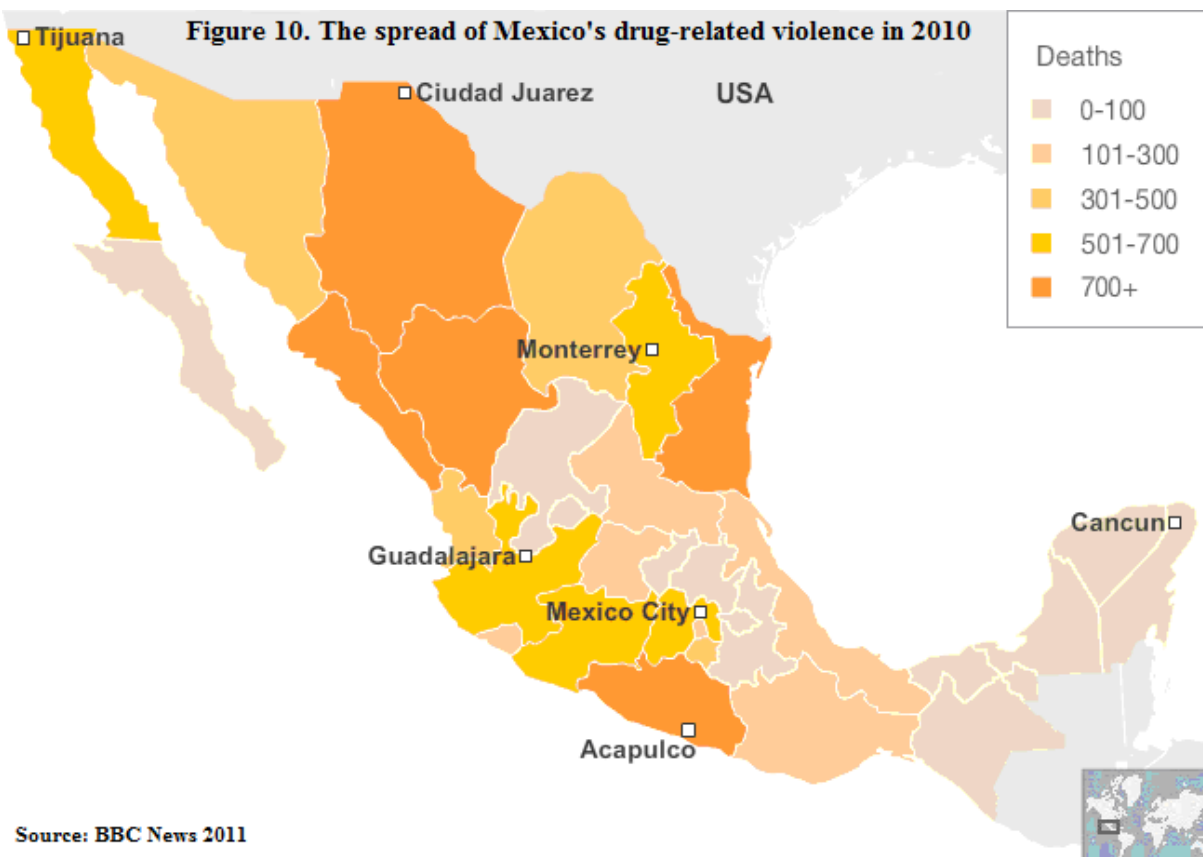
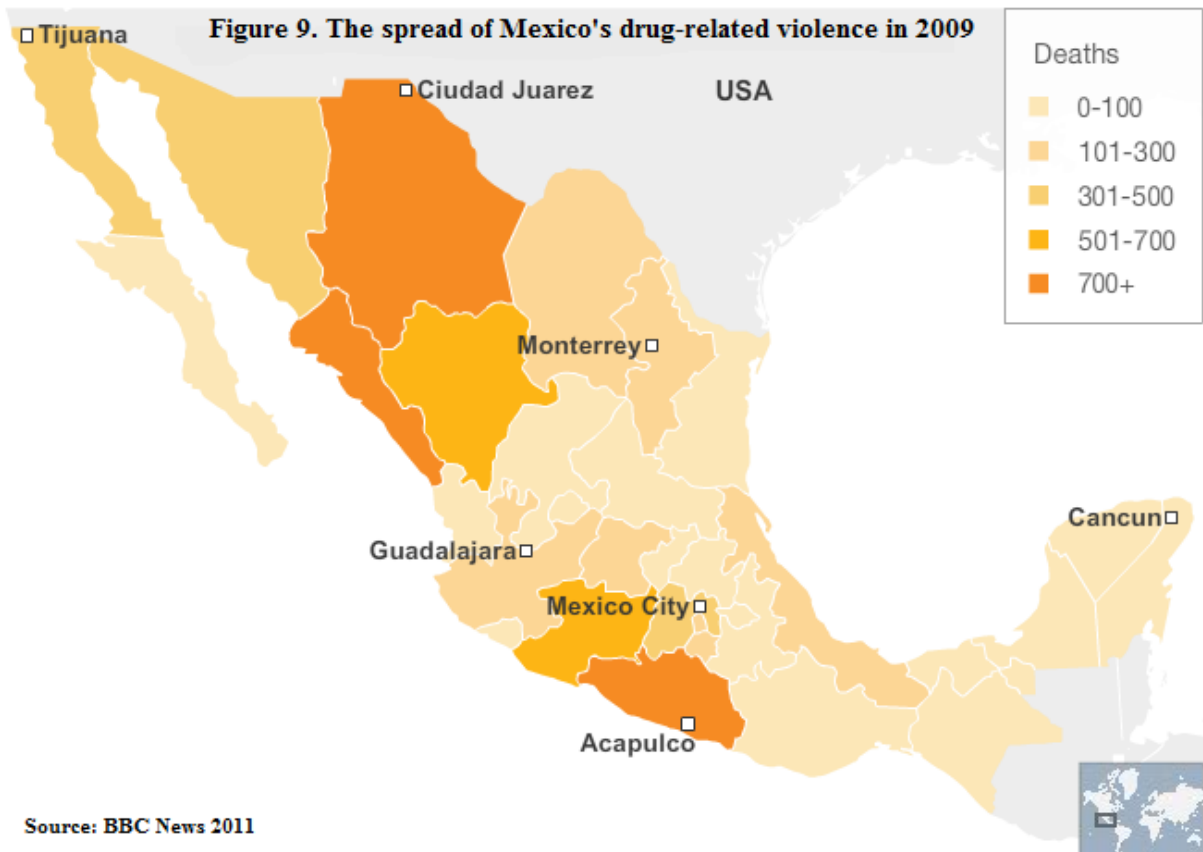
Whereas the number of drug-related killings was as high as 1500 in 2005, the number had exceeded the 5000 by the year 2008 (Grayson 2010). In 2009 over 7000 drug-related deaths have been counted¹⁰ and last year the number reached the unprecedented height of 15,273 drug-related deaths¹¹. The total number of drug-related killings since Calderón became president in 2006 reached 34,612 at the end of last year¹².

Besides, there has also been significant variation in the territorial distribution of violence (Shirk 2010). In 2006 most violence was concentrated in the states of Michoacán, Sinaloa and Guerrero. As of 2007 other states, especially in the border region, began to experience significant increases in the number of drug-related deaths. By 2008 the overall number of drug-related killings in Mexico had more than doubled, but this increased violence was largely concentrated in three states: Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Baja California. Together they accounted for more than half of all the drug-related killings in Mexico that year. The year 2009 again witnessed significant increases in violence, this time again mostly concentrated in Chihuahua, but also a dispersion was noticeable to other states such as Durango and Sinaloa, both Chihuahua's neighboring states in the 'Golden Triangle' region (see figure 8). Also Jalisco, Guerrero and Michoacán were significantly impacted. The past year has witnessed high levels of violence especially in the state of Tamaulipas. As it appears the violence is spreading into new territories, especially along the border with the U.S. and on the Pacific coast (see figure 9).

10 El Universal, 8 December 2009, 'Van 7 mil muertos en 2009; la guerra es más sangrienta', visited on 11 August 2011, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/primera/34057.html>

11 BBC News, 13 January 2011, 'Mexico updates four years of drug war deaths to 34.612', visited on 11 August 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-ameica-12177875>

12 Ibid.



In addition to the increase and spread of violence to other areas, its nature has also become more diverse. Whereas during the 1990s and under Fox the violence was mostly drug-related, under Calderón the drug organizations have broadened their operations by expanding into other criminal activities such as: kidnapping, extortion, contraband and human smuggling (O'Neill 2009, Grayson 2010). Moreover, the militarization of the problem has also contributed to the diversification of the violence. Juan Carlos Gutierrez from the *Comisión Mexicana por la Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos* explained that with the permanent use of armed forces the conflict has become a war and military strategies have been implemented that usually allow for collateral damage to take place.¹³ These strategies are directed at eliminating an enemy, instead of keeping order and finding a peaceful solution to a public security matter. As a result, the levels of human rights abuses have increased in the country. Both the militarization and the diversification of criminal activities have augmented the amount of innocent civilians that have become victims of violence over the past years.

For example, at the beginning of April 2011 Mexican society became appalled by the discovery of 193 dead bodies in 47 mass graves in the village of San Fernando, Tamaulipas. The victims were mostly migrants from Central America who traveled by bus towards Reynosa, a city in the state of Tamaulipas at the frontier with the U.S. Only one year earlier in August 2010 72 corpses were found at a ranch in the same village of San Fernando, also mostly migrants. The very violent cartel Los Zetas is said to be responsible for these deaths. Members of the cartel supposedly hijacked buses and obliged the male passengers to join their forces. Those who refused were shot to death just like the women and children.¹⁴

As these kind of horrifying events take place on a more regular basis and more innocent civilians are becoming victims, it seems no longer sufficient to talk of 'the fight against drug traffic'. The country has ended up in a security crisis that comprises more than the fight against drug traffic alone. However, as Edgar Gómez from the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal* explains, the authorities continue to focus on and talk of '*la lucha contra el narcotráfico*', while the problem is already much more extensive.¹⁵ In this way the true scope and characteristics of the violence in Mexico are ignored.

Another worrisome fact is that the security crisis has not only caused the death of many people, it has also created a side effect, which is the normalization of violence. The everyday presence of killings in the country makes only one homicide seem insignificant.

¹³ Informal talks with Juan Carlos Gutierrez Contreras, Geneva, 30 May 2011- 2 June 2011.

¹⁴ BBC News, 13 April 2011, 'Tamaulipas: Failed state in Mexico's war on drugs', visited on 15 August 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13061452>

¹⁵ Interview with Edgar Gómez, Mexico City, 02 May 2011.

Besides, Mexicans are starting to become used to live their lives in terror, not to be able to leave their houses or talk about what happened out of fear for reprisals.

As a result of the aggravated situation in the country security analysts have put up the question whether Mexico or parts of its territory is heading towards a failed state.¹⁶ Especially in the state of Tamaulipas anarchy appears to be lurking as the local government is losing more and more control of its territory to the Zetas. The federal government strongly rejects this view and states that the violence is confined to a few municipalities.¹⁷ These kinds of statements are very likely to be politically motivated as the elections in 2012 are coming closer. There appears to be hardly any space for criticism of the security strategy. As for the fate of Tamaulipas, the question that remains is if Calderón is not able or willing to turn the tide, can and will his successor?

3.3 Mexico's criminal organizations

When President Calderón was inaugurated in December 2006, four major criminal organizations operated in Mexico: the Arellano Félix Organization (or Tijuana cartel), the Sinaloa cartel, the Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization (or Juárez cartel) and the Gulf cartel (CRS 2011). As Calderón's anti-drug strategies were being implemented, these organizations have become more competitive in trying to control Mexico's drug routes (*plazas*). They have expanded their distribution networks and been able to take over control from other Latin American drug trafficking organizations.

By 2010 seven major criminal organizations controlled Mexico's drug industry: The Sinaloa Federation, the Arellano Félix organization (or Tijuana cartel), the Vicente Carrillo Fuentes organization (or Juárez cartel), the Beltran Leyva organization, La Familia, the Gulf cartel and Los Zetas (Stratfor 2010, CRS 2010). However, according to Stratfor (2011), a global intelligence firm, the past year has witnessed various changes in the spectrum of Mexican organized crime. The arrest or killing of several of the organization's top leaders has resulted in split offs and new alliances between groups.

In general, the organized crime landscape has become more fractured, but most of the organizations gravitate towards two poles. On the one hand there is the Sinaloa Federation and its associates and on the other hand there are the Zetas and their affiliated groups. Some

¹⁶ BBC News, 13 April 2011, 'Tamaulipas: 'failed state' in Mexico's war on drugs', visited on 15 August 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13061452>

¹⁷ Ibid.

other organizations have remained independent and not loyal to either of these groups. They are mostly newer organizations who split from the former Beltran Leyva organization, which has not been able to stand firm after the death of its leader, Arturo Beltran Leyva in December 2009 (Stratfor 2011). Below I will give an overview of the three alliances (Sinaloa, Zetas and independent organizations) that currently dominate the organized crime landscape and control most of Mexico's drug trafficking routes.

3.3.1 *The Sinaloa Federation alliance*

Mexico's largest and most powerful criminal organization is the Sinaloa Federation. It descends from the Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo network that largely controlled Mexico's drug industry during the 1980s. The Federation is run by Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman Loera, who is Mexico's most wanted fugitive and one of the world's wealthiest men. The organization is comprised of a network of smaller organizations, hence the name 'Federation'. It is said to dominate 45% of Mexico's drug trade and has expanded its presence throughout the country (Stratfor 2011) and internationally in South America, Europe and West Africa (CRS 2011).

Some analysts believe the government favors the Federation as it has suffered less from enforcement efforts than its competitors. The government strongly denies these accusations and the military's July 2010 killing of the organization's third man, Ignacio 'El Nacho' Coronel Villareal supports the argument that the Sinaloa Federation has also been seriously hit¹⁸. However, Jesus Zambada, the son of the organization's second leader Ismael 'El Mayo' Zambada and under trial for drug trafficking to the U.S., recently testified in Chicago that it was the U.S. government who closed a deal with the cartel. In exchange for information about competitive organizations the cartel was supposedly allowed to import cocaine into the U.S. This tactic would fit U.S. government strategies to deal with drug-trafficking organizations as it resembles the way the Medellin and Cali cartel in Colombia have been handled during the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁹

Although The Federation has been able to conquer much territory in and outside Mexico, it is still trying to take over the *plaza* in Ciudad Juárez from the Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization, an organization that used to be part of the Federation until 2008. This

18 The Guardian, 30 July 2010, 'Death of drug lord Ignacio 'Nacho' Coronel deals blow to Mexican cartel', visited on 16 August 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/30/mexico-drugs-lord-shot-dead>

19 Crime Site, Dossier Mexico, 2 August 2011, 'VS sloot deal met grootste drugskartel', visited on 16 August 2011, <http://www.crimewebsite.nl/dossier/mexico/21713-diego.html>

has partly caused the high levels of violence taking place in this area over the past years. Although the battle between both cartels over the *plaza* continues, the ultimately diminishing presence of the military has resulted in fewer deaths than first were anticipated by the government for this year (Stratfor 2011). Besides fighting the Juárez cartel, the Federation has over the past year been confronted more regularly by a different rival that has rapidly increased in power and expanded its territory: Los Zetas. To confront Los Zetas, the Federation has aligned with other groups that face this same enemy.

The Gulf cartel is the largest of them and clashes heavily with Los Zetas as it tries to hold on to its *plazas*, which are located on the east coast of the country, especially in the state of Tamaulipas. The cartel has a long history in drug trafficking and was considered the most powerful drug trafficking organization in Mexico at the beginning of Calderon's administration (Stratfor 2009, CRS 2009). Since then it has been heavily targeted by Mexican law enforcement and military efforts. At its height, during the 1990s under Osiel Cardenas Guillén, the cartel was able to gain much of its power with the help of its former paramilitary branch, Los Zetas. When Cardenas was arrested in 2003 he maintained control over his drug enterprise from out of prison, which resulted in his extradition to the U.S. in 2007. After his extradition los Zetas broke away and formed an independent organization in 2009. As of February 2010 tensions between the Gulf cartel and the Zetas exploded and resulted into violent encounters (Stratfor 2010).

The other ally of the Sinaloa Federation is the Arellano Félix Organization, or Tijuana cartel. This syndicate was originally headed by several brothers of the Arellano Félix family, who inherited their drug enterprise from Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, the 'godfather' of Mexico's illegal drug industry. It was once one of the two dominant cartels in the country and competed against the more powerful Juárez cartel (CRS 2011). The organization's influence started to diminish when several of its leaders were arrested by Mexican or U.S. law enforcement agencies. When the last brother, Eduardo 'El Doctor' Arellano Félix, was apprehended in 2008 the cartel split in two factions and a bloody fight over the control of power broke out (Stratfor 2009). Nowadays Fernando 'El Ingeniero' Sanchez Arellano, nephew of the founding brothers and leader of one of the factions heads what remains of the Arellano Félix organization. The cartel still dominates the *plaza* of Tijuana but is said to pay the Federation for the right to use it (Stratfor 2011).

3.3.2. *The Los Zetas alliance*

Over the past year Los Zetas have become an increasingly powerful organization, dominating most of the territory on the Mexican eastern coast and the Yucatan Peninsula. The organization is headed by Heriberto ‘El Lazca’ Lazcano Lazcano and consists of former members of the Mexican army’s Special Forces (GAFEs). After its split with the Gulf cartel Los Zetas have contracted themselves to other criminal organizations, such as the former Beltran Leyva Organization, to offer protection before becoming independent in 2009. The organization has become known for its very violent behaviour, use of military strategies and weaponry and engagement in other criminal activities such as kidnapping and human trafficking (CRS 2007; 2009, Stratfor 2011, WOLA 2007b). Furthermore, Los Zetas have managed to establish a good relationship with the Guatemalan special forces Los Kaibiles, who turned to organized crime as well and helped to facilitate expansion into Guatemala (Stratfor 2009, Grayson 2010, Williams 2009).

Although the organization is expanding and becoming more powerful it has also suffered losses as several of its leaders have been arrested by federal forces. For example the arrest of Martin Omar ‘El Kilo’ Estrada Luna, who is suspected for being directly responsible for the mass killing of migrants in San Fernando in August 2010 and in April 2011²⁰. The arrest of such well trained leaders is hard to replace. Although the organization tries to recruit Mexican soldiers and police officers, it has also felt the need to replace its losses by recruiting illegal immigrants and gang members (Stratfor 2011, Grayson 2010).

Los Zetas are joined in their fight against the Federation by other criminal organizations. The Cartel Pacifico Sur is one of the Zeta allies, which is headed by Hector Beltran Leyva, the brother of Arturo who headed the Beltran Leyva Organization and was killed by Mexican forces in December 2009 in Cuernavaca. After Arturo died, the Beltran Leyva Organization split up in several factions that became independent or joined the Sinaloa Federation, to which the Beltran Leyva Organization originally belonged. Hector managed to establish a new independent organization after the split up, the Cartel Pacifico Sur, and fights over control of the central and western coastal regions of Mexico.

Another ally is the Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization, one of the older Mexican cartels whose leadership used to be in hands of Vicente’s brother, Amado ‘El señor de los cielos’ Carrillo Fuentes, one of Mexico’s largest drug kingpins of the 1990s who was known to transport cocaine by small airplanes from Colombia to the U.S. and died while undergoing

20 See: Crime Site, Dossier Mexico, 17 April 2011, ‘Verdachte massamoorden aangehouden’, visited on 16 August 2011, <http://www.crimesite.nl/dossier/mexico/21038-massagraven-160-doden-verdachte-aangehouden.html>

facial surgery in 1997 (Gootenberg 2010). The Juárez cartel was at that time the most powerful cartel in the country. Nowadays it has suffered greatly from fights with the Sinaloa Federation, but remains in control of the border crossing in Ciudad Juárez. The Juárez cartel's enforcer arm, La Linea, has aligned with Los Zetas to remove the Federation from Chihuahua state.

3.3.3. Independent organizations

Besides organizations that align with either the Sinaloa Federation or the Zetas, several others have remained independent and fight their rivals and the government forces alone. One of these organizations is known as The Knights Templar, a new organization from the state of Michoacán that developed this year as the result of a split of La Familia Michoacana into two separate factions (Stratfor 2011). The split occurred after the death of La Familia's leader Nazario 'El Más Loco' Moreno Gonzalez in December 2010. Just as La Familia was characterized for its cult-like ideology, The Knights Templars are also a mysterious group, whose members are said to dress up like knights from the Middle Ages and perform blood pacts and initiation rituals²¹. The organization is headed by Servando 'La Tuta' Gómez Martínez and fights the Sinaloa Federation for trying to take over the territory that used to be under control of Sinaloa leader Ignacio 'Nacho' Coronel.

The other faction that resulted after the split of La Familia Michoacana continued under this same name and has been struggling to survive in the criminal world. The organization is much smaller than The Knights Templar and has been a primary target of the Mexican military. It has been involved in a fierce fight for supremacy with its counterpart²². The arrest of its leader Jose 'El Chango' Mendez Vargas in June this year has however made the future of this group very uncertain.

A last independent organization that plays a significant part in the Mexican illegal drug industry is the Independent Cartel of Acapulco that was created after the split of the Beltran Leyva Organization and consists of followers of Edgar 'La Barbie' Valdez Villareal, a

21 Al Jazeera, 22 July 2011, 'The Knights Templar': Mexico's newest drug cartel', visited on 16 August 2011, <http://blogs.aljazeera.net/americas/2011/07/22/knights-templar-mexicos-newest-drug-cartel>

See also: You Tube, 20 July 2011, 'Drug trafficking for 'justice' in Mexico', visited on 16 August 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_0x_rekO9o

22 Global Post, 21 June 2011, 'Mexico: New cartel on the block', visited on 16 August 2011, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/americas/mexico/110621/knights-templar-drug-war>

former leader of the Beltran Leyva Organization who was arrested in August 2010.²³ The group is hostile to Los Zetas as La Barbie and his enforcers were fighting them for many years and also to the Sinaloa Federation which they believed betrayed Arturo Beltran Leyva, the former leader of the Beltran Leyva Organization and tries to take over the control of the port of Acapulco, which has resulted in high levels of violence over the past year in this tourist location (Stratfor 2011).

All in all the organized crime landscape in Mexico appears to have become more fractured over the past year as old cartels have split up and new alliances have been made. This demonstrates the dynamic character of organized crime, which has become a specific element of the security crisis. It has made the crisis more complex and different from other armed conflicts in which the fighting parties are more clearly defined. In this crisis it almost comes true that today's friend could be tomorrow's foe. In the map below the areas that are dominated by the current most important criminal organizations are visualized.



23 The Telegraph, 31 August 2010, 'Mexican drug kingpin 'La Barbie' arrested', visite don 16 August 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/mexico/7973866/Mexican-drug-kingpin-La-Barbie-arrested.html>

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed how the drug trade in Mexico has developed throughout the past centuries. It has become clear how the PRI government that was in power for over 70 years has sought to close deals with drug traffickers instead of fighting them. This has offered drug traffickers opportunities to create drug trafficking organizations that have grown in power, especially after the arrival of cocaine and the abolishment of the Colombian cartels. The rerouting of cocaine through Mexico has enhanced these organizations' influence over the past years. By the time the PRI's hegemony started to fall apart, the organizations had become so well organized and sophisticated that they became difficult to challenge for the new PAN governments in 2000 and 2006.

Especially president Felipe Calderon made combating these criminal organizations the center piece of his administration. After his inauguration in 2006 he deployed military forces to areas where drug-related violence was concentrated. This has resulted in the arrest of several of the cartel's leaders, but also in the increase of violence and human rights violations over the past 5 years. Moreover, the organized crime landscape has become more fractured as a result of the split up of several organizations, which has created more inter- and intra-cartel fighting over power and turf and caused the violence to spread to other areas in the country. Besides, the nature of the violence has become more diverse as organizations have started to employ other criminal activities such as extortion and kidnapping. At the moment 9 groups control most of Mexico's territory. The majority of these groups are affiliated to either the Sinaloa Federation or the Zetas.

4. THE RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN MEXICO'S CURRENT CONTEXT

In this chapter I will focus on the last and most important research question of this thesis, which is: *'How do (inter)national NGOs assess the relationship between gender-based violence and the security crisis in Mexico and how does it affect their work?'* To answer this question it is not only necessary to analyze NGOs working methods, but also how the authorities attend to the matter of gender-based violence, as it forms the basis for activists' work. In paragraph 4.2 I will discuss the government's response to cases of violence against women and after that focus on how NGOs try to address the issue. Before I will see to this I will start by taking a look at how activists understand the relationship between violence against women and the current context of the security crisis. This is a good starting point because it will outline the problem activists try to address and also it will become clear how authorities make use of the context of the security crisis in acting against violence against women. I will finish this chapter by discussing how the current context of the crisis has affected activists' work.

4.1 The security crisis and violence against women

As the previous chapter has made clear, overall levels of violence have increased as a result of the security crisis. Drug-related violence, extortions and kidnappings are behind the rising levels of violence and killings in the country. Although most of the victims are men, either working for government forces or criminal groups, also women have become victimized. Data collected by the *OCNF* demonstrate that the amount of women murdered has increased drastically during the last five years. NGOs and activists make a distinction in the kind of violence.

On the one hand there is the generalised violence in the country of which women have become victims, either for being at the wrong time at the wrong place, for example in a shopping mall at the time of a shoot out or for actively participating in this security crisis as police or military officers. Other women are said to have been hired by criminal groups as *narcomenudistas* or *vigilantes*. Activists mention that especially since the economic crisis of 2008 the poor have been left with few other options for economic survival. Other women are involved in criminal groups as girlfriends or relatives of drug bosses. They usually conduct

criminal activities as well and in some cases even occupy important leading positions within criminal organizations. A good example of such a '*mujer del narco*' is Sandra 'La Reina del Pacífico' Ávila Beltrán, niece of the former godfather of the Mexican drug trade Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, who was an important link between the Sinaloa cartel and the Colombian Norte del Valle cartel until she was arrested in 2007.²⁴ These women run the risk of becoming victims of this generalised violence in the country.

On the other hand, the security crisis also makes women victims of violence specifically directed against them. According to human rights activists the deployment of military forces has increased the number of human rights violations, especially 'war crimes' such as sexual violence against women. Moreover, women have become victims of *levantones*, especially in disputed areas. Criminal groups supposedly abduct women to abuse them, sometimes even keep them as sex slaves and subsequently murder them and dump their bodies. Activists furthermore mention that women may have been killed as part of initiation rituals of criminal groups or that they have become victims of human trafficking, an activity criminal groups are said to deploy more frequently to finance their other activities. This may explain the rising number in disappearances over the past years. However, due to lack of proper investigations into these murders and disappearances, all these explanations remain speculative.

Both violence against women and violence in general have resulted directly from the security crisis. The crisis has, however, also offered indirect opportunities to harm women. According to activists the generalised violence in the country has changed cultural perceptions of violence in Mexico. Violence has become normalized and a human life seems to be of less value, either man or woman. This context has created opportunities to aggressors who wish to commit violence against women. One killing may seem small and of less importance against the background of the executions, deaths and assassinations Mexicans hear about and live with everyday.

In addition, the context of the security crisis offers also an indirect opportunity in another way. Patricia Bedolla, from the *Comisión de Equidad de Género*, mentioned a case of a victim found murdered in a hotel room.²⁵ Her body was accompanied by a so-called *narco-mensaje*. Cartel members leave these messages for rival criminal groups or the government explaining their acts, committed mostly as revenge. In this case the message appeared to be

²⁴ El Mundo, 18 August 2008, 'La Reina del Pacífico, una narcotraficante con grandes dotes de líder y aficionada al lujo', visited on 16 September 2011 <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2008/08/18/internacional/1219075251.html>

²⁵ Interview with Patricia Bedolla, Cuernavaca, 28 April 2011.

from one of these criminal groups. However, the hand writing was very different from earlier messages as was the orthography. Hence, the murder was at first classified as a drug-related killing. Thanks to research by Patricia Bedolla and her group the murder was finally classified as a femicide. It turned out that the woman was killed by her husband, who had fabricated the message in order to make the murder look like one of the many drug-related killings. He had hoped to avoid apprehension as drug-related crime is hardly investigated seriously and quickly filed. I will return to this issue of labelling violence as drug-related violence by authorities in the next paragraph.

4.2 Institutional violence

From all the conversations during my fieldwork in Mexico the point most emphasised by activists is the failure of the government to properly address the problem of violence against women. During and before the security crisis, it appears that the state has sent the message that a woman's life is of less value. Several factors are behind the impunity and permissibility regarding violence against women. It is useful to make a distinction between state practices and systemic factors. In the following I will first discuss several practices of state employees that human rights activists have identified. After that I will focus on a systemic problem Mexico faces in dealing with crimes and violence.

When discussing practices of state employees in dealing with cases of violence against women, it becomes clear that *machismo* and political interests play an important part. Women and women's issues are mostly not taken seriously. This will become clear when looking at the various strategies adopted by the authorities to make the problem of gender-based violence seem less important, extended and complicated.

First, activists emphasize that authorities regularly interpret the problem by blaming the victim. Nowadays everything is *narco*. Authorities tend to explain what happened to the victim stating that she was probably a drug trafficker or somehow involved in organized crime. However, this 'blaming the victim-strategy' is nothing new. In the 1990s when the first dead bodies of women started to appear in Ciudad Juárez the argument brought forward many times was that the women were probably prostitutes. Both interpretations of the problem lead to the fact that scant importance is granted to conducting proper investigations. The victim 'could have seen it coming,' either because she was a prostitute or a drug trafficker. In any case, she is to blame. One of my respondents mentions this:

*'[...] en la política del estado todo es narcotráfico, o sea ya no hay robos, fraudes, feminicidios, todo es narcotráfico. Todos los problemas de éste país lo reducen a narcotráfico, a la delincuencia organizada, a las bandas, a los Zetas, a los Chapos, a todo, ¿no? Y es el único discurso que escuchas, es la única preocupación y la única política pública que se esté implementando. Y en el caso de feminicidio afecta aun más, porque justo en el tema de feminicidio culpabilizan, ahora no son prostitutas, ahora son narcotraficantes.'*²⁶

Second, activists mention that authorities also minimize the problem of violence against women. For example by labelling all forms of violence as drug violence, authorities seem to believe they have cleared themselves from any investigative responsibilities. By making these women disappear in the drug statistics the problem of feminicides becomes invisible. This is especially true since cases of violence against women are hardly registered. When they are registered, information is generally incomplete or imprecise. For example, as Luz Estrada from *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir* mentions, in cases of domestic violence it is generally unclear what type of violence (sexual, physical, psychological etc.) is involved.²⁷ This makes it difficult to conduct proper analyses and assess the meaning of these incidents.

It also appears that much of the violence against women is quickly identified as the family or domestic type even if there is no such proof. Luz Estrada mentioned that authorities of the state of Mexico said that most of the violence committed against women had been taking place in the domestic sphere, even though the information provided by the ENDIREH 2006 household survey could only account for 30 percent of the violence taking place in the domestic sphere.

Third, authorities ignore the needs of women in general and especially those who have become victims of violence. As Patricia Olamendi, feminist and human rights defender argues, there is insufficient public policy for attending women who have been victimized; neither is there any infrastructure available.²⁸ There are hardly any shelters women can go to or programs of social assistance. Especially in rural areas it is difficult for women to find help. Shelters are absent and their scarce economic resources make it difficult to travel in search for help. It is not uncommon that these women live their complete lives in violence. Violence suffered since they were young girls in the hand of their fathers, uncles, grand fathers and brothers until they are grown and continue to live in this circle of violence, now

²⁶ Interview with Ana Yeli Pérez, Mexico City, 27 April 2011.

²⁷ Interview with Luz Estrada, Mexico City, 14 April 2011.

²⁸ Interview with Patricia Olamendi, Mexico City, 25 April 2011.

sustained by their partners. The lack of help prevents them from stepping out of this circle. Patricia mentions that the problem is not so much that there are no government funds available, but more that this money is generally used for other purposes that are deemed more important.

Fourth, when confronted by NGOs or activists about not properly attending cases of violence against women authorities regularly deny their responsibilities. For example they declare that the victims are from another federal state or even country which makes them not responsible. Local authorities also try to point to a neighbouring state or even municipality that also faces violence to avoid responsibility. Sometimes local authorities argue they do not need to comply with international standards since they didn't sign the agreements or treaties, but the national government. In other words, there is no coordination between the different levels of government and each level tries to push its responsibilities to other levels.

When authorities really feel cornered when confronted by activists the most common reaction is to pretend they take the problem very seriously and quickly organise a forum, create an institution, do anything to demonstrate commitment. However, as many of my respondents said this behaviour is nothing more than simulation. The new institutions are only created to make it seem as if the state takes responsibility, but no sufficient time or effort is put in truly making these institutions function. There is no real compromise and no advances are made in addressing the problem of gender-based violence. Women simply do not matter enough. Or as Patricia Olamendi said: '*No estamos en la agenda*'.²⁹

As I mentioned before, there are other factors that contribute to the impunity and permissibility regarding cases of violence against women in Mexico. It is not only the incapacity of government officials to take this matter seriously; it is also the poor quality of the entire criminal justice system. Several points can be made that demonstrate the system's bad functioning. First, the system is in transition since 2008. In June of that year a constitutional reform implied the modification of the complete criminal justice system in the country, both on federal and local level by 2016. This extended time period has caused the modification to take place very slowly and unevenly in all federal states, according to Fernando Coronado from the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal*.³⁰ Until now 9 states have started to implement the reform (Baja California, Chihuahua, Zacatecas, Durango, Nuevo León, Estado de México, Oaxaca, Morelos and Yucatán).

²⁹ Interview with Patricia Olamendi, Mexico City, 25 April 2011.

³⁰ Interview with Fernando Coronado, Mexico City, 02 May 2011.

However, these states have started to reform their systems at different moments and in different ways. This means the modification is taking place in a very fragmented way; some states have started by reforming the offenses, others by types of offenses and again others by region. Until now only one state has completed the reform in all its territory: Chihuahua.³¹ Worrying is that even with a completed reform the criminal justice system in Chihuahua has already demonstrated deficiencies. Prefabricated files have been used to document cases that incorporate the same vices and abuses as the old criminal justice system³². Not to mention the states that have not yet completed the reform.

The main deficit in the criminal justice system, which is the second point, is that no proper and consistent investigations are conducted by law enforcement and justice agencies. In the case of violence against women this becomes clear since hardly any information is documented and no national data base exists, even though the *Ley General de Acceso* of 2007 demands it as does the sentence of the Campo Algodonero case from the Inter American Court of Human Rights in 2009. This makes the problem invisible, and almost non-existent to the authorities.

Third, the fact that proper investigations are scarce may also be related to the fact that no control takes place. Neither the actors within the criminal justice system nor the quality of the investigations are controlled by any authority. This often means persons are detained arbitrarily and even tortured. It is uncommon people are detained without their rights being violated. Fernando Coronado mentions this also happens in cases of violence against women, but since the perspective of law is against women it hardly happens that perpetrators are detained to begin with.

A good example is the case of the Egyptian. During the late 1990s, after enormous international pressure on the government to investigate the murders in Juárez, a man with the Egyptian nationality called Abdul Latif Sharif, a chemist with a criminal record in the U.S., was found guilty of murdering several women and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. Even as evidence was lacking and the murders continued, Sharif stayed in prison until his death 11 years later. This example demonstrates the failure of the government to investigate crimes properly and to detain a probable suspect. The international pressure caused the government to take quick action and to demonstrate that they were taking the matter seriously. It is likely that Sharif was a scapegoat. Again it was only a façade to hide a failing system.

31 Animal Político, 17 March 2011, '5 Puntos para entender la reforma al sistema de justicia penal mexicano', visited 17 August 2011, <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2011/03/cinco-puntos-para-entender-la-reforma-al-sistema-de-justicia-penal-mexicano/>

32 Ibid.

In short, it appears that both the practices of authorities and the poor criminal justice system cause impunity and permissibility to prevail in cases of gender-based violence. The problem of violence against women is not taken seriously, nobody feels responsible, no serious investigations are conducted and no control mechanisms are in place. This results in the fact that women may not only face violence at home, they also face institutional violence as they try to achieve justice for their cause. Fortunately, they do not stand alone in their struggle. Many non-governmental organizations and activists try to pressure the government in taking action and offer help to the victims. In the next paragraph I will discuss in more detail how these NGOs work and what strategies they adopt to achieve their goals.

4.3 The advocacy network and its working methods

In the theoretical framework of this thesis I have elaborated on Keck and Sikkink's theory (1999) of transnational advocacy networks and the strategies these networks adopt to bring issues to the public agenda. As has become clear, these networks are comprised not only of non governmental organizations, but also of feminists, academics and international human rights bodies that support women's rights. They make use of the strategy of framing to bring issues to the public agenda. The issue of violence against women has often been framed as a human rights violation in the past. When looking at non governmental organizations in Mexico that address the problem of gender-based violence it seems interesting to ask if Keck and Sikkink's theory can be used to understand and explain what is happening in Mexico. In the following I will first look at the advocacy network on violence against women, and after that focus on the framing strategy of organizations that form part of this network.

I have found that also in Mexico it should be fair to speak of advocacy networks. Not only non-governmental organizations address the problem of violence against women, but also academics, feminists, politicians and even some governmental organizations. For example most of the organizations I have incorporated in my research form part of the OCNF. The OCNF works closely together with Mexican feminists, such as Marcela Lagarde and Julia Monárrez, politicians, such as Teresa Inchausteguí, and lawyers, such as Karla Michel Salas of the Campo Algodonero case, in trying to address the problem of feminicides. Moreover, they cooperate with other non governmental institutions, such as the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, but also with government institutions, such as the *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres* and with international human rights bodies, such as the United Nations Human

Rights Council and the Inter American Commission for Human Rights. With the help of these network-partners the OCNF tries to put pressure on the Mexican authorities to take responsibility and investigate crimes properly and also offer psychological and legal assistance to the victims and their families.

As Keck and Sikkink had suggested earlier, the strategy to bring issues to the public agenda consists of constructing cognitive frames. The issue of violence against women has many times been framed as a human rights issue in the past. Especially after the Belém do Para convention of 1994 and the UN Beijing convention of 1995 violence against women has been integrated into the human rights discourse. In Mexico violence against women is also framed as a human rights violation. Most of the organizations that are part of the OCNF had a very strong human rights focus. It thus seems logical they chose the human rights frame to bring the issue of violence against women to the public. Moreover, the frame has proven to be strong and offers local organizations a global network that includes the support of large international bodies, international agreements, the human rights language and, not to forget, resources.

Although the issue of violence against women gained more importance after becoming framed as a human rights issue, it is still a subject that few Mexican NGOs have incorporated into their agenda's, says Patricia Olamendi.³³ The organizations aligned in the OCNF are among the few that have a gender agenda. They only started to include the issue when the situation in Ciudad Juárez became untenable. Before the problem started in Ciudad Juárez, several organizations were still non-existent and others focused on different human rights issues such as torture. Still, practically all the organizations currently aligned in the OCNF focus on several topics, for example torture, arbitrary detention and children's rights. Several of them have a strong religious character. Patricia mentions that most non-governmental organizations in Mexico depend too much on the availability of funds and sensibility of the public whether to include certain issues. Unfortunately, there is little sensibility when women are concerned in Mexico and money has to be found elsewhere, which makes it difficult for organizations to work with this subject matter.

Not only has gender proven to be a difficult subject to work with, in Mexico the frame based on human rights has also caused problems for organizations. This becomes clear when taking a closer look at the creation of the 2007 *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia*. With the international human rights frame as a basis of addressing

³³ Interview with Patricia Olamendi, Mexico City, 25 April 2011.

women's problems, it seems logical that at the national level many of the initiatives brought forward by NGOs and advocates to address this issue are also of a juridical nature.

One of the important objectives of creating the *Ley General de Acceso* was to make the problem of violence against women in Mexico more visible as it calls for the creation of a national data base, which still does not exist. Moreover, the law offers two mechanisms to address the problem of violence against women: individual protection measures and a collective protection measurement called '*alerta de violencia de género*'.

The individual protection measures are meant to protect women in cases of emergency, such as the accompaniment of the victim by a police officer to her house after denouncing an act of violence. The *alerta de género* is a mechanism that civil society organizations, such as the ones aligned in the OCNF, can request when the number of feminicides in a certain federal state is becoming alarming and also when a state's legislation is violating women's rights (*agravio comparado*). The *alerta de género* consists of certain measures the local government needs to adopt immediately to improve the situation for women. The institution that decides whether the *alerta* will be accepted is the *Sistema Nacional para Prevenir, Atender, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra las Mujeres*, a national institution with representatives of all federal states and headed by the *Secretaría de Gobernación*³⁴.

Ana Yeli Pérez of the CMDPDH, said that at the time of my visit to Mexico, three attempts had been undertaken by the OCNF to apply the *alerta*-mechanism.³⁵ The first time was in the state of Oaxaca in 2008 for not protecting indigenous women who had become victims of a territorial dispute in the Triqui region, the second time was in the state of Guanajuato in 2009 for *agravio comparado*, because women who had undergone an abortion had been incarcerated for homicide and the third time was in the state of Mexico in 2010 for the alarming situation of feminicidal violence in the past years. Unfortunately, none of the *alertas* was accepted by the *Sistema Nacional*.

According to Ana Yeli in Oaxaca both the women and local organizations were too afraid to testify as they were threatened and they feared militarization of the region once the *alerta* would be implemented. In Guanajuato, the *Sistema* voted against the *alerta* as it was supposedly 'unconstitutional and against local legislation'³⁶, and in the state of Mexico the

34 Milenio, 21 June 2009, 'La burocracia en Oaxaca impide activar la Alerta de Violencia de Género', visited on 19 August 2011, <http://impreso.milenio.com/node/8595470>

³⁵ Interview with Ana Yeli Pérez, Mexico City, 27 April 2011.

36 El Universal, 20 July 2009, 'Rechazan alerta por violencia de género en Guanajuato', visited on 19 August 2011, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/613578.html>

Sistema Nacional voted against the *alerta*, without any proper motivation or explanation. Some suggested that the *alerta* was politically motivated and directed against the governor who is expected to have a good chance to become Mexico's next president in 2012.³⁷

In other words, the newly created *Ley General de Acceso* and its mechanisms have so far not been helpful in protecting women and making the problem of violence against women more visible. Besides, there is more to it. The *Ley General* is, just like the name already reveals, a general law that only works as a format for local governments to make their own *Ley de Acceso*. This has resulted in dissimilarities between the several *Leyes de Acceso* in the various states of the republic. The real problem with this is that neither the *Ley General* nor the local *Leyes de Acceso* are applied, since there is no harmonization with criminal law. According to Ana Yeli Pérez, the prosecutor responsible for investigating violence against women only takes into account the criminal law and the codes of criminal procedure. It is thus no surprise that violence against women largely remains unpunished. The prosecution doesn't have sufficient knowledge of either the national or international juridical framework, says Ana Yeli.³⁸

It becomes clear again that the problem in addressing violence against women can largely be attributed to a failing criminal justice system. It is worrying that civil society organizations and activists make use of this same system to achieve justice and protection for women in Mexico. Time and again they come up with or support initiatives for laws and rules that have to address the problem of violence against women.

In the following part I will focus on the most recent juridical attempt of activists to address the problem of violence against women, which has been referred to as '*la tipificación del feminicidio*'. This *tipificación* implies the adoption of femicide as an autonomous crime in criminal law. Activists consider femicide to be a different crime than homicide for its specific characteristics and which therefore deserves to be mentioned as a separate crime. They point to the misogynist elements that typically characterise a femicide. Guadalupe Ramos Ponche of the organization CLADEM mentioned an example that involved an old lady who was walking to church early in the morning to attend mass and was assaulted by a drugged young men.³⁹ The old lady didn't bring any money with her, which annoyed her assailant and he finally killed her. Instead of quickly leaving he took the tiara she wore on her

³⁷ See also: Címac Noticias, 11 January 2011, 'Desechan alerta de género para proteger a Peña Nieto', visited on 19 August 2011, <http://www.cimacnoticias.com.mx/site/11011109-Desechan-alerta-de.45847.0.html>

³⁸ Interview with Ana Yeli Pérez, Mexico City, 27 April 2011.

³⁹ Interview with Guadalupe Ramos Ponce, Guadalajara, 4 May 2011.

head and inserted it into her vagina. Such demeaning acts demonstrate hatred towards women characteristic of femicide, says Guadalupe. To differentiate a femicide the *modus operandi* of the murder but also the location of the body and the way it is left behind are important. This is exactly why activists emphasize time and again the need to properly investigate and document cases.

At the time of field work a forum was held about how to make this legal codification possible. Critics don't see how the subjective elements that characterize a murder can become part of criminal law. Moreover, they don't believe a new codification will make the problem diminish and thus consider it unnecessary. Most activists who support the initiative agree that the new codification will not solve the problem, but they believe it will make the problem more visible, which is considered a first step in the right direction. Besides, it is thought that a specific codification for femicide will send out the message to society that these kinds of acts are not tolerated. Until now only two states in the country have adopted femicide as an autonomous codification in their criminal justice system (the Estado de Mexico and the Federal District). It is therefore too early to draw any conclusions whether typifying femicide has helped to make the problem more visible and perhaps even reduce it.

Besides bringing up or supporting new initiatives for reforms, laws and codifications the OCNF organizations and other activists try and seek other ways to address the issue of violence against women. In general, activists take every possibility at hand to make the problem known to the public. For example by advertising in the subway or making radio or teleVisión commercials. They also develop campaigns for schools and give workshops to women in local communities. Many rural women have lived their lives in violence, often unaware of their rights. Some organizations also offer psychological help or channel the women to the institutions that offer this kind of assistance.

Where some organizations focus more on creating public policy, such as *Visión Mundial*, others, such as the CMDPDH, focus more on strategic litigation. This generally means they bring cases of violence against women to mostly the Inter American Commission for Human Rights in Washington or sometimes the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Campo Algodonero case is a good example. In this case, the murders of three young women in Ciudad Juárez were brought before the Inter American Court for Human Rights. Activists also try to convince UN Special Rapporteurs or delegates from the Inter American Commission of Human Rights and other international bodies to come to Mexico and see for themselves what is going wrong in the country and to put international pressure on the government.

Organizations aligned in the OCNF try to monitor cases of feminicides as good as possible to make the problem visible, since the government fails to do so. Luz Estrada mentions that she and her *compañeras* continuously try to have a dialogue with authorities and to persuade them to take action, to live up to their promises and comply with international agreements. The sentence of the Campo Algodonero case is also frequently used to remind authorities of their duty.

To sum up, NGOs and activists seek various ways to put the issue of gender-based violence on the agenda and to persuade authorities to comply with their responsibilities. However, it becomes clear that practically all initiatives are either itself of a legal nature or evolve around the issue of human rights and specifically women's rights. The problem of violence against women is framed as a human rights issue and in the case of Mexico this is problematic since the judicial system itself falls short on many levels. That being the case, the element still missing in this situation is the current security crisis in Mexico. What influence does this have on the methods and strategies of NGOs and activists? In the next paragraph I will take a closer look at this question.

4.4 Activists and the security crisis

In the first paragraph of this chapter I discussed the relationship between gender-based violence and the security crisis. It became clear that more women have been killed over the past years and it seems reasonable to assume the wider security crisis has been of (in)direct influence. However, due to the lack of research most cases have generally ended in impunity. The combination of increasing numbers of female victims and the lack of authority's response has created more work for NGOs and activists. However, this has become even more difficult than before the security crisis. A distinction can be made in difficulties activists encounter in their work and in their personal lives as they themselves have also become more vulnerable.

When the work of activists is concerned, they consider their task more difficult nowadays. As Patricia Bedolla mentions, they not only need to document cases now to make the problem of violence against women visible, but also need to pull the victims of feminicide out of the drug statistics.⁴⁰ Before the current security crisis, activists had already spent many years in making authorities more sensible to the subject of gender. When this finally started to bear some fruit, the security crisis developed and undid previous successful attempts. Besides,

⁴⁰ Interview with Patricia Bedolla, Cuernavaca, 28 April 2011.

the relationship with the authorities has hardened and activists now need to battle more to get the information they need and to make sure cases are properly documented.

According to Patricia, they battle with the authorities and the media to protect the victim or the victims family. It is not unusual victims are stigmatized by the media. Patricia explains that when a woman is murdered, the media mostly find out where she lived, then publish an article together with a picture of the woman and go to her neighbourhood to sell the newspaper. The title of the article or the message that the vendors shout may reveal that she was supposedly a prostitute, because she wore gold coloured shoes for example. As a result, the victims and their families are stigmatized.

The other difficulty activists encounter concerns their personal lives. Activists themselves have become more vulnerable during the security crisis. Many of them are threatened by criminal groups to stop investigating or conducting research. Activists are targeted by these groups and some have even been killed. Also journalists face these threats. The National Commission for Human Rights has documented eight murders of reporters and editors in 2011 until September. A total of 74 have been murdered since 2000.⁴¹

However, even though activists consider the workload has increased since the security crisis and it has become more difficult and dangerous to do their job, it has not made them change their working methods. They continuously try to be creative and invent new ways and options to address the problem of violence against women.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the relationship between gender-based violence and the security crisis from the perspective of NGOs and activists. I have focused on the role of the government and the issue of institutional violence. Subsequently I have discussed how NGOs and activists have responded to this and the working methods they adopt and finally how their work is affected by the security crisis.

As I have shown, women have become victimized more frequently over the past years. Activists mention the direct and indirect relationship with the security crisis. The problem of gender-based violence and the relationship with the security crisis remains largely invisible due to lack of investigations by authorities. Victims are frequently confronted by institutional

⁴¹ Nacla, 6 September 2011, 'Dangerous Walks of Life', visited on 18 September 2011, <https://nacla.org/blog/2011/9/6/dangerous-walks-life>

violence in trying to achieve justice. Authorities do not take responsibility and the justice system falls short on many levels. NGOs and activists try to help victims and make the problem of violence against women visible. Since they have framed violence against women as a human rights issue, activists have to operate within the same failing juridical environment. The security crisis has made it even more difficult for activists to do their job, as authorities are caught in the discourse and strategies of the 'war on drugs'. Time and again, the authorities' behaviour and the failing justice system appear as the core problems in addressing violence against women in Mexico. To improve this, a profound social and cultural change in behaviour towards women and a structural reform of the criminal justice system are necessary.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is the result of several months of desk research and one month of field work in Mexico in the Spring of 2011. The central research problem I formulated for my research was *'How do (inter)national NGOs and activists engage with gender-based violence in Mexico against the background of the current security crisis?'*. To be able to answer this question I first discussed the characteristics of gender-based violence, followed by the characteristics of the security crisis and finally I discussed the relationship between these two concepts from the perspective of activists and how they are affected by the crisis in their work.

It became clear that gender-based violence in Mexico is defined as any act or omission based on gender that causes physical, psychological, economical, patrimonial or sexual violence and takes place either within the private or the public sphere. The most extreme expression of violence is defined by activists as femicide and can be divided in several categories, such as systemic sexual femicide and intimate femicide. Activists have made it their job to document cases of femicide to examine its characteristics and make the problem visible. Their data demonstrate that most of the femicides registered over the past five years took place in the state of Mexico, whereas during the 1990s the problem was particularly serious in the state of Chihuahua. The victims of these killings are mostly between 21 and 40 years of age and conduct activities outside the home. They mainly died as a result of excessive use of physical force or gunfire and their bodies were often found in public places. Important to mention is that in many cases the identity of the victim remains unknown, as is the identity of the killer. Also differences exist between the various states of the republic, both in quantity and in characteristics of femicides.

The security crisis is characterised by the increasing levels of generalised violence in the country that has developed since 2006. Felipe Calderón made combating drug traffic a center piece of his administration and has deployed over 45.000 troops to areas where drug-related violence is concentrated. As a result, several drug kingpins have been arrested, but human rights violations and levels of violence have increased drastically over the past five years. Moreover the organized crime landscape has become more fractured as a result of the split up of several organizations, which has resulted in more inter- and intra-cartel fighting and caused the violence to spread to other areas in the country. Also the nature of the violence has become more diverse as organizations have started to employ other criminal activities such as extortion and kidnapping. At the moment nine groups control most of Mexico's territory, of which the majority is affiliated to the Sinaloa Federation or the Zetas.

When discussing the relationship between gender-based violence and the security crisis, activists mention the increased number of female victims during the crisis, both due to generalized and gender-based violence. The main problem they identify is that a climate of impunity and permissibility has evolved that allows the murderers of these women to go unpunished. Victims are frequently confronted by institutional violence in trying to achieve justice. Authorities do not take responsibility and the justice system falls short on many levels. NGOs and activists try to help the women in achieving justice, by offering legal and psychological assistance and put pressure on the Mexican government to properly investigate crimes against women.

Activists use the strategy of framing to put issues on the public agenda. In case of violence against women, the issue is framed as a human rights violation. This means activists can depend on a global human rights network and make use of the human rights language to address violence against women in Mexico. They continuously seek ways to put the issue on the agenda, but many of their initiatives are judicial of nature. This makes it difficult to achieve any successes, since the legal system in Mexico falls short on several levels. The security crisis has made it even more difficult and dangerous for activists to do their job, as authorities are less sensitive to their appeals since they focus solely on combating drug traffic and activists' personal security is at stake. Although their work has become more difficult and dangerous, activists' have not yet changed their strategies because of the crisis.

The answer to the central research problem thus is that activists engage with gender-based violence in a similar way as before the crisis, by framing violence against women as a human rights violation. This provides them the tools to put pressure on the Mexican government. Although activists can count on the support of a global human rights network, their work is far from easy. They are confronted with authorities that fail to take responsibility and trivialise the problem of violence against women. Also the poor quality of the legal system results in few cases of violence against women being properly investigated. As a result, impunity reigns in cases of violence against women. The security crisis has only worsened this problem as authorities appear solely focused on fighting drug, while more women have become victims of violence over the past years. Although activists try to bring this issue to the agenda and pressure the government to take action, there is still a long way to go before women and violence against women are taken seriously in Mexico.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Articles

- Amnesty International (2003) *Mexico: Intolerable Killings: 10 Years of Abductions and Murder of Women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua*.
- Astorga, L. (2000) 'Organized Crime and the Organization of Crime' in Bailey J.J & R. Godson (2000) [eds.] *Organized Crime & Democratic Governability: Mexico and the US-Mexican borderlands*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 58-82.
- Astorga, L. (2005) *El siglo de las drogas: El narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio*, Mexico D.F. : Random House Mondadori.
- CRS (2007) 'Mexico's Drug Cartels', *CRS Report for Congress RL34215*, Congressional Research Service, October 16, 2007.
- CRS (2009) 'Mexico's Drug-Related Violence', *CRS Report for Congress R40582*, Congressional Research Service.
- CRS (2010) 'Latin America and the Caribbean: Illicit Drug Trafficking and U.S. Counterdrug Programs', *CRS Report for Congress R41215*, Congressional Research Service.
- CRS (2011) 'Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations: Source and Scope of the Rising Violence', *CRS Report for Congress R51576*, Congressional Research Service.
- Cleary, E. (1997) *The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America*, Westport [etc.]: Praeger Publishers.
- Friedman, E. J. (2005) 'The Reality of Virtual Reality: The Internet and Gender Equality Advocacy in Latin America'. In: *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 47 (3), pp. 1-34.
- Gootenberg, P. (2010) 'Blowback: The Mexican Drug Crisis'. In: *NACLA report on the Americas*, Vol. 43 (6), pp. 7-12.
- Grayson, G.W. (2010) *Narco-violence and a failed state?*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Heise, L. (1995) 'Violence Against Women: Translating international Advocacy Into Concrete Change'. In: *The American University Law Review*, Vol. 44, pp. 1207-1212.
- Hume, M. (2009) *The Politics of Violence: Gender, Conflict and Community in El Salvador*, Chichester [etc.]: Wiley-Blackwell.

- Jacobs et al. (eds.) (2000) *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance*, London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Keck, E. & K. Sikkink (1999) 'Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics'. *UNESCO 1999*, pp. 89-101.
- Kelly, L. (1988) *Surviving Sexual Violence*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lagarde, M. (2006) 'Del femicidio al feminicidio'. In: *Desde el Jardín de Freud*, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, pp. 216-225.
- Lang (2009) 'Assessing Advocacy: European Transnational Women's Networks and Gender Mainstreaming'. In: *Social Politics*, Vol. 16 (3), pp. 327-357.
- Livingston, J. (2004) 'Murder in Juárez: Gender, Sexual Violence and the Global Assembly Line'. In: *Frontiers*, Vol. 25 (1), pp. 59-76.
- Loyola, M. (2009) 'Mexico's Cartel Wars', in *National Review*, June 22 2009, pp. 36-38.
- Lupsha, P.A. (1991) 'Drug lords and narco-corruption, The players change but the game continues', in *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 16, pp. 41-58.
- Monárrez Fragoso, J. (2002) 'Feminicidio sexual serial en Ciudad Juárez: 1993-2001'. In: *Debate Feminista*, Año 13, Vol. 25, pp. 279-304.
- Nathan, D. (1999) 'Work, Sex and Danger in Ciudad Juárez', *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 33 (3), pp. 24-47.
- OCNF (2008) *Una Mirada al Feminicidio en México 2007-2008*, Informe del Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Feminicidio
- OCNF (2010) *Una Mirada al Feminicidio en México 2009-2010*, Informe del Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Feminicidio
- Olesen, T. (2005) *International Zapatismo: The Construction of Solidarity in the Age of Globalization*, London & New York: Zed Books.
- O'Neill, S. (2009) 'The Real War in Mexico', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88 (4), pp. 63-77.
- Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) (1999) *Toward gender equity in health sector reform policies*, Presentation before Special Subcommittee on Women, Health and Development, Washington, DC, 8-9 February, 1999.
- Panizza, F. (1995) 'Human Rights in the Processes of Transition and Consolidation of Democracy in Latin America'. In *Political Studies*, XLIII, pp. 168-188.

- Pimentel, S.A. (2000) 'The Nexus of Organized Crime and Politics in Mexico' in Bailey J.J & R. Godson (2000) [eds.] *Organized Crime & Democratic Governability: Mexico and the US-Mexican borderlands*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 33-57.
- Radford, J. & E.A. Stanko (1991) 'Violence against Women and Children: The Contradictions of Crime Control under Patriarchy', in Stenson, K. & D. Cowell (eds.) *The Politics of Crime Control*, London [etc.]: Sage Publications.
- Radford, J. & D.E.H. Russell, (1992) *Femicide: The politics of women killing*, New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Radford, J. L. Kelly and M. Hester (1996) 'Introduction', in Hester et al. (eds.) *Women, Violence and Male Power*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Rodriguez, T. (2007) *The Daughters of Juárez*, New York [etc.]: Atria Books.
- Sanford, V. (2008) 'From Genocide to Femicide: Impunity and Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Guatemala'. In *Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 7, pp. 104-122.
- Schmidt Camacho, A. (2005) 'Ciudadana X: Gender Violence and the Denationalization of Women's Rights in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico'. In: *The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 5 (1), pp. 255-292.
- Shirk, D.A. (2010) 'Drug violence in Mexico: data and analysis from 2001-2009', in *Trends in Organized Crime*, Vol. 13, pp. 167-174.
- Sikkink, K. (2004) *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Sikkink, K. (2006) 'The Emergence, Evolution, and Effectiveness of the Latin American Human Rights Network', in Jelin, E. & E. Hershberg (eds.) (2006) *Constructing Democracy: Human Rights, Citizenship and Society in Latin America*, Oxford: Westview Press Inc. pp. 59-84.
- Sperling, V., Ferree, M. & B. Risman (2001) 'Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism'. In: *Signs*, Vol. 26 (4) pp. 1155-1186.
- Staudt, K. (2008) *Violence and Activism at the Border: Gender, Fear and Everyday Life in Ciudad Juárez*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Stratfor Global Intelligence (2009) 'Mexico: The War with the Cartels in 2009', *Global Security and Intelligence Report*, December 9, 2009.

- Stratfor Global Intelligence (2010) 'Mexican Drug Cartels: An Update', *Special Report*, May 17, 2010.
- Stratfor Global Intelligence (2011)'Mexican Drug Wars Update: Targeting the Most Violent Cartels', July 21 2011.
- Toro, M.C. (1995) *Mexico's "War" on Drugs: Causes and Consequences*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Torres Trucios, E.E. (2008) *Ni Una Más. International Cooperation against Gender-Based Discrimination: The Femicide Case in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico*. Dottorato di Ricerca, Cooperazione Internazionale e Politiche per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile, Università di Bologna, Italia.
- United Nations (1995), *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995. New York; United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996.
- United Nations (2009) *15 Years of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences (1994-2009): A Critical Review*, Audrey Thompson (ed.), United Nations.
- UN Expert Group Meeting (2007) ENDIREH-2006's Achievements and Limitations in Determining Indicators for Measuring Violence Against Women in Mexico, Working Paper, October 2007
- Velasco, J.L. (2005) *Insurgency, Authoritarianism, and Drug Trafficking in Mexico's "Democratization"*, New York: Routledge.
- Washington Valdez, D.(2006) *The Killing Fields: Harvest of Women*, Burbank: Peace at the Border.
- WHO (2002) 'Chapter 1 Violence - A Global Public Health Problem', in *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva: World Health Organization.
- WHO (2005) *Multi Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women*, Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Williams, P. (2009) 'Illicit Markets, Weak States and Violence: Iraq and Mexico', in *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 52, pp. 323-336.
- WOLA (2007a) *Hidden in Plain Sight: Violence against Women in Mexico and Guatemala*, WOLA Special Report.
- WOLA (2007b) 'At a Crossroads: Drug Trafficking, Violence and the Mexican State', WOLA, Briefing Paper Thirteen, November 2007.

- World Bank (1993) *Investing in Health*, World Development Report, Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Wright, M. (2006) 'Public Women, Profit, and Femicide in Northern Mexico'. In: *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 105 (4), pp. 681-698.
- Wright, M. (2011) 'Necropolitics, Narcopolitics and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border'. In: *Signs: journal of women in culture and society*, Vol. 36 (3), pp. 707-731.

Internet and Media

- Al Jazeera, 22 July 2011, 'The Knights Templar': Mexico's newest drug cartel', visited on 16 August 2011, <http://blogs.aljazeera.net/americas/2011/07/22/knights-templar-mexicos-newest-drug-cartel>
- Amnesty International, Mexico, jaarboeken 2007, 2008, 2009, www.amnesty.nl / www.amnesty.org
- Animal Político, 17 March 2011, '5 Puntos para entender la reforma al sistema de justicia penal mexicano', visited 17 August 2011, <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2011/03/cinco-puntos-para-entender-la-reforma-al-sistema-de-justicia-penal-mexicano/>
- BBC News, 'Mexico updates four years of drug war deaths to 34.612', 13 January 2011, visited on 15 August 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12177875>
- BBC News, 13 April 2011, 'Tamaulipas: Failed state in Mexico's war on drugs', visited on 15 August 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-13061452>
- Cimac Noticias, 11 January 2011, 'Desechan alerta de género para proteger a Peña Nieto', visited on 19 August 2011, <http://www.cimacnoticias.com.mx/site/11011109-Desechan-alerta-de.45847.0.html>
- Crime Site, Dossier Mexico, 17 April 2011, 'Verdachte massamoorden aangehouden', visited on <http://www.crimesite.nl/dossier/mexico/21038-massagraven-160-doden-verdachte-aangehouden.html>
- Crime Site, Dossier Mexico, 2 August 2011, 'VS sloot deal met grootste drugskartel', <http://www.crimesite.nl/dossier/mexico/21713-diego.html>
- El Universal, 8 December 2009, 'Van 7 mil muertos en 2009; la guerra es más sangrienta', visited on 18 November 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/primera/34057.html>

- El Universal, 20 July 2009, 'Rechazan alerta por violencia de género en Guanajuato', visited on 19 August 2011, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/613578.html>
- Global Post, 21 June 2011, 'Mexico: New cartel on the block', visited on 16 August 2011, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/americas/mexico/110621/knights-templar-drug-war>
- INEGI (2007) Estadística, Encuestas en Hogares, Encuesta Nacional sobre la Dinámica sobre las Relaciones en Hogares 2006, <http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/Proyectos/Encuestas/Hogares/especiales/endir eh/endireh2006/default.aspx>
- INEGI (2011), Población, Distribución por edad y sexo, <http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/sisept/Default.aspx?t=mdemo02&s=est&c=17499>
- INMUJERES (2006) Violencia sexual contra las mujeres en el seno de la pareja conviviente [WWW Document] http://cedoc.inmujeres.gob.mx/documentos_download/100790.pdf
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994) '*Convention of Belém do Pará*. [WWW Document] <http://www.cidh.oas.org/women/convention.htm>
- Ley General de Acceso a las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia 2007 [WWW Document] <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGAMVLV.pdf>
- Milenio, 21 June 2009, 'La burocracia en Oaxaca impide activar la Alerta de Violencia de Género', visited on 19 August 2011, <http://impreso.milenio.com/node/8595470>
- NACLA, 6 September 2011, 'Dangerous Walks of Life', <https://nacla.org/blog/2011/9/6/dangerous-walks-life>
- New York Times, 23 December 2007, '10 Years Later, Chiapas Massacre Still Haunts Chiapas', <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/23/world/americas/23acteal.html>
- Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, 11 May 2010, 'Juárez, por segundo año consecutivo, la ciudad más violenta del mundo', visited on 18 November 2010, <http://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/sala-de-prensa/58-cd-Juárez-por-segundo-año-consecutivo-la-ciudad-mas-violenta-del-mundo>

- The Guardian, 12 January 2010, 'Arturo Beltran Leyva obituary', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/12/arturo-beltran-leyva-obituary>, visited on 24-08-2011
- The Guardian, 30 July 2010, 'Death of drug lord Ignacio 'Nacho' Coronel deals blow to Mexican cartel', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/30/mexico-drugs-lord-shot-dead>
- The Telegraph, 31 August 2010, 'Mexican drug kingpin 'La Barbie' arrested', visited on 16 August 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/mexico/7973866/Mexican-drug-kingpin-La-Barbie-arrested.html>
- Volkskrant, 'Ciudad Juárez (Mexico) gewelddadigste stad ter wereld', 12-01-2010, <http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/article1337235.ece>
- You Tube, 20 July 2011, 'Drug trafficking for 'justice' in Mexico', visited on 16 August 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_0x_rekO9o

Interviews

- Maria de la Luz Estrada Mendoza, spokeswoman *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir* and coordinator *Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio*, Mexico City, 14 April 2011
- Teresa Incháustegui Romero, PRD deputy and coordinator *Comisión de Femicidios* of the Chamber of Deputies, Mexico City, 15 April 2011
- Verónica Abreu Rivera, spokeswoman *Visión Mundial*, Mexico City, 20 April 2011
- Patricia Olamendi Torres, human rights lawyer and former undersecretary for Global Affairs, Mexico City, 25 April 2011
- Nahyeli Ortiz Quintero, spokeswoman *Inmujeres del Distrito Federal*, Mexico City, 26 April 2011
- Ana Yeli Pérez Garrido, lawyer *Comisión Mexicana por la Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos*, Mexico City, 27 April 2011
- Patricia Bedolla Zamora, deputy assistant *Comisión Equidad de Género* of the Morelos state Congress, Cuernavaca, 28 April 2011
- Fernando Coronado Franco, general legal consultant *Comisión por los Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal*, Mexico City, 2 May 2011

- Edgar Gómez Jaimes, legal advisor *Comisión por los Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal*, Mexico City, 2 May 2011
- Guadalupe Ramos Ponche, feminist and spokeswoman *Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer*, Guadalajara, 4 May 2011