



Organized crime-related disappearances in Mexico: evidence from Durango, Tamaulipas, and Coahuila

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Abstract

More than 77,000 people have disappeared in Mexico since the beginning of the war on drugs, but very little is known about them. After analyzing the descriptions of a non-randomized sample of disappearance registries from governmental data, we find that those events associated with organized crime are better understood by analyzing four factors: migration to the U.S. border and traveling on highways, gender differences and individual vs. multiple-victim disappearances, the forced recruitment of skilled and unskilled workers, and cooperation with the authorities. These results should be used as a starting point for pushing the government to release better data and to improve search mechanisms.

Keywords Disappearances · Organized crime · War on drugs

Introduction

Since the beginning of the war on drugs in early 2007, more than 77,000 people have disappeared in Mexico. While there are complex underlying factors behind each disappearance, a significant percentage of these cases have traditionally been attributed to organized crime. As the government has been unable to respond to reports of disappearances throughout the country, it has adopted a narrative of denial about the atrocities committed during the war on drugs. As argued by Cohen (2005), this

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