

January 09, 2015 | By Christine Clark

Security and Human Rights in Mexico and Central America Focus of UC San Diego Conference Jan 15-16



Mexico and Central America are facing unprecedented violence as a result of rising illegal economies, including drug and human trafficking, as well as from increasing authoritarian governance, corruption and near total impunity for violators of human and citizen rights. At the same time, citizens from these nations are fleeing their countries of origin to the United States, confronting new forms of violence from migration officials, gangs and eventually, if apprehended, the U.S. state.

Issues of corruption and migration, as well as citizen and state responses to violence and insecurity will be at the center of a two-day conference at the University of California, San Diego to be held Jan. 15 and 16. The event is designed to bring policymakers and scholars together to talk in depth about how these issues are affecting both sides of the border and how public policy should be shaped to find solutions to this human rights crisis.

[The Citizenship, Security & Human Rights in Mexico and Central America](#) conference is free and open to the public, and is organized by the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IR/PS) and UC San Diego's Eleanor Roosevelt College Human Rights Program.

“Increasing crime in Mexico and Central America has made life in these countries more precarious and insecure, causing citizens to become more willing to approve the state’s use of force and even to take matters into their own hands,” said IR/PS Dean Peter Cowhey.

“Policymakers and scholars will discuss the consequences of insecurity and assess the reforms necessary to assure citizen rights while reducing crime.”

Roundtable discussion on Thursday, Jan. 15 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. will focus on politics, policing, violence and human rights in Mexico. The group of participating policymakers will discuss, among other things, an incident that occurred in Iguala in the state of Guerrero, in which 43 student protesters disappeared. The students were detained by a group of municipal police officers and then turned over to the criminal organization Guerreros Unidos, which allegedly massacred the students. The disappearance has put the spotlight on a region where drug-trafficking organizations seem to operate freely and, even in coordination with local government and police. The talk will feature discussion on how the event has produced an overwhelming civil society response, in Mexico and across the world, calling for an end to impunity for the violators of human rights. Scholars will discuss a variety of responses to insecurity, from local organizing to policies combatting corruption. Participants include journalist Marcela Tuarti, Maria Teresa Sierra from Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, as well as Carlos Vilalta of Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas. The discussion will be moderated by Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, professor at Stanford University.

“We have a fantastic group of scholars participating in this conference, including many professors and undergraduate student researchers from our region,” said Nancy Postero, director of UC San Diego’s Human Rights program and professor of anthropology. “This event is especially timely as it will be the first major conference among scholars and policymakers since the 2014 Iguala mass disappearance and President Obama’s recent announcement on plans for immigration reform.”

A panel discussion from 10 a.m. to noon on Friday, Jan. 16 will focus on those who have borne the brunt of the violence, including transnational immigrants who have been impacted by the multiple forms of criminality at play in the region. The group will discuss the multiple dimensions of violence—interpersonal, socially organized and state-led. The panel will also focus on the gendered, generational and racialized nature of violence in response to the alarming trends of femicide and domestic violence, as well as the discoveries of mass graves of Central American migrants, and the continued detention and deportation of vulnerable youths.

Participants will include professors Lynn Stephen from University of Oregon, Ramona Perez of San Diego State University, Elana Zilberg of UC San Diego and Shannon Speed from the University of Texas, Austin.

The Citizenship, Security and Human Rights in Mexico and Central America conference will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Jan. 15 and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Jan. 16 in the Malamud Conference Room at the Weaver Center and the Great Hall, both located on the UC San Diego campus.

Co-sponsors include the UC San Diego International House, the Center on Global Justice, Blum Cross-Border Initiative and Scholars Strategy Network.

For more information and to register, click [here](#).

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