

## **Mexico's Mass Disappearances and the Drug War (Ayotzinapa: The Missing 43 Students): Drug War Timeline 1930-2015**

This research guide was created after the exhibition *Ayotzinapa: We Will Not Withers*, held at Memorial Library from September 16 to October 30, 2015.

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### **Drug War Timeline 1930-2015**

**Entries followed by an asterisk (\*) are adapted from: "Thirty Years of America's Drug War: A Chronology". *Frontline PBS*. PBS, 2012. Web. June 29, 2015.**

**To jump directly to the Mexican Drug War click [HERE](#)**

1930: The use of cannabis and other drugs comes under increasing scrutiny after the formation of the [Federal Bureau of Narcotics](#) (FBN) in 1930, headed by [Harry J. Anslinger](#) as part of the government's broader push to outlaw all recreational drugs. Anslinger claims cannabis causes people to commit violent crimes, act irrationally and become overly sexualized. The FBN produces propaganda films and posters promoting Anslinger's views and Anslinger often comments to the press regarding his views on marijuana.

**Marijuana Propaganda from 1935, Federal Bureau of Narcotics, public domain**

**See the trailer for [Reefer Madness](#) propaganda film against marijuana**

1937: Marijuana Tax Act passed. On the surface merely a nominal tax on any possession or transaction of marijuana, the Act's draconian enforcement provisions, combined with the stringent legal requirements involved in obtaining a tax stamp, make it a *de facto* criminalization that effectively outlaws not only recreational but also medical uses of marijuana.

**For the full [Marijuana Tax Act](#) text**

1937: Millionaire newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst throws his weight behind the passage of the Marijuana Tax Act. Hearst was highly invested in the paper industry, and it has been suggested that he was threatened by the potential of industrial hemp as a cheap alternative to wood pulp in paper production. (Hemp cultivars of *cannabis sativa*, although not psychoactive, fell within the scope of the Act).

1938-1939: Mexican President, Lázaro Cárdenas, attempts to place production of narcotics under state control. The U.S. reacts with an embargo against all medicinal products coming from Mexico. Under this threat, the Mexican state

instead simply allows the industry to exist with covert help from the army, police, politicians, and regional governments.

1939-1945: World War II blocks Turkish and European imports of opium, marijuana and heroin (needed for the production of morphine). Mexico's production of poppy and hemp increases.

1959: Stepan Company is the only company in the world approved by the U.S. to legally import cocaine, bringing around 100 trillion tons of dried coca leaves from Peru annually. Cocaine is extracted and sold to Mallinckrodt, a pharmaceutical company; leaves are sold to the Coca Cola Company.

Late 1960s\*: Recreational drug use rises in the U.S.

1968\*: Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs is founded.

1969\*: Psychiatrist Dr. Robert DuPont conducts urinalysis of everyone entering the D.C. jail system in August of 1969. He finds 44% test positive for heroin. DuPont convinces the city's mayor Walter Washington, to allow him to provide methadone to heroin addicts.

In an attempt to reduce marijuana smuggling from Mexico, the Customs Dept., under Commissioner Myles Ambrose, subjects every vehicle crossing the Mexican border to a three-minute inspection. The operation lasts two weeks and wreaks economic havoc on both sides of the border.

The U.S. Bureau of the Budget reports that marijuana offers "individual farmers up to 40 times the income that any legitimate crop might provide".

**For more on [Operation Intercept](#)**

1970\*: The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) is founded by Keith Stroup. The group lobbies for decriminalization of marijuana.

1970, October 27: Congress passes the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act. This law consolidates previous drug laws and reduces penalties for marijuana possession. It also strengthens law enforcement by allowing police to conduct "no-knock" searches.

**For President Richard Nixon's [remarks](#) on the Act**

1971\*: Soldiers in Vietnam develop heroin addiction.

1971, June 18\*: President Richard Nixon considers drug abuse "public enemy number one" and coins the term "War on Drugs". The Drug Policy Alliance estimates that the United States spends \$51 billion annually on the War on Drugs. During the Nixon era, for the only time in the history of the War on Drugs, the majority of funding goes towards treatment, rather than law enforcement.

1971: According to journalist Diego Osorno, a report from the *Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales* dated June 30, 1971, under the guise of combating drug trafficking and with the help of U.S., Mexican President Luis Echeverría dispatches 12,000 troops to Guerrero in order to suppress a popular guerrilla which demanded changes to the socio-economic order of the *campesinos*.

**For more information on [Mexico's Dirty War](#)**

1971, September: Operation Golden Flow goes into effect in order to attack heroin habits of U.S.'s Vietnam War Veterans by forcing them to begin urinalysis. They had test negative or undergo detox for a week before they could go home.

1972\*: The Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement is founded in the U.S.

1972: The French Connection—a heroin smuggling ring between France and the U.S.—is broken up.

1973\*: The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is established.

**For more history of the [DEA](#)**

1974, August 9\*: President Nixon resigns. President Gerald Ford steps in.

1975: Ford administration releases White Paper on Drug Abuse which names marijuana a “low priority drug” in contrast to heroin, amphetamines, and mixed barbiturates.

**For Gerald R. Ford [Message to Congress on Drug Abuse](#)**

1975, November 22\*: Colombian police seize 600 kilos of cocaine from a small plane at the Cali airport—the largest cocaine seizure to date. In response, drug traffickers begin a vendetta—“Medellin Massacre.” 40 people die in Medellin in one weekend.

1975: Operation Condor starts. The U.S. provides weapons, manpower, CIA and FBI resources and national embassies in order to capture, kill, and disappear opponents of capitalism in Uruguay, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia, Paraguay, Colombia, and Venezuela. This continued with Ronald Reagan in 1981 under the guise that it was an operation against druglords. It is estimated that 60,000 people were murdered.

1976\*: Jimmy Carter campaigns on the decriminalization of marijuana.

1976, August\*: Anti-drug parents' movement in the U.S. begins after having found marijuana in a 13-year-old's birthday party. Support for criminalization increases.

1977: U.S. media glamorizes cocaine use.

From 1973 to 1977, eleven states decriminalize possession of marijuana.

1978\*: The Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act is amended. It now allows law enforcement to seize all money and/or “other things of value furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a controlled substance [and] all proceeds traceable to such an exchange.”

1979\*: Carlos Lehder purchases property on Norman’s Cay in the Bahamas. It would serve as a safe place for planes to refuel between Colombia and the U.S.

**For [interview](#) of drug trafficker George Jung and life on Norman’s Cay**

1979, July 11: In Miami, the first drug related fatal shootout takes place in broad daylight. Two gunmen exit a party truck, enter the Dadeland Mall and shoot a Colombian trafficker and his bodyguard, injuring a store clerk and a stock boy in the process.

**For a [2.44 minute video](#) about this event**

1981-1982\*: Rise of the Medellin Cartel.

**For more on the [Colombian Cartels](#)**

1981\*: The U.S. and Colombia ratify a bilateral extradition treaty, which they had previously approved in 1979. Ronald Reagan assumes office and prioritizes the War on Drugs.

\*First Lady Nancy Reagan starts “Just Say No” Campaign, this marks the beginning of zero-tolerance policies throughout the United States.

1982\*: In response to U.S. pressure, the Bahamian government begins to crack down on Carlos Lehder’s operation on Norman’s Cay.

1982: A deal between Colombian drug trafficker Pablo Escobar and Panamanian President, Manuel Noriega, allows cocaine transport through Panama.

1982: South Florida Drug Task Force is formed.

1982, March: Pablo Escobar is elected to the Colombian Congress.

**For a Documentary on the Life of Pablo Escobar see [King of Coke](#)**

1982, March 9: After the seizure of 3,906 pounds of cocaine, valued at over \$100 million wholesale, from a Miami International Airport hangar the U.S. law enforcement approach realizes drug traffickers are working together in a “cartel”.

1982: Mexico re-negotiates the external debt with the International Monetary Fund which requires all public industry to be privatized, remove subsidies, shrink and eliminate import taxes, and increase foreign investment, as well as freeze salaries, cut public spending, and devalue the Mexican peso.

1984, March 10\*: By tracking the illegal sale of massive amounts of ether to Colombia, the DEA and Colombian police discover Tranquilandia, a massive laboratory operation, with land strips and luxury villas, deep in the Colombian jungle.

**Ex-drug trafficker Juan David Ochoa, part of the Medellin Cartel [describes the effects](#) of this bust**

1984, April 30: Assassination of the Colombian Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla fuels the extradition controversy.

1984, November 6: The DEA and Mexican officials raid a large marijuana cultivation and processing complex in the Chihuahua desert owned by kingpin Rafael Caro Quintero. 7,000 campesinos work at the complex, where between 5,000-10,000 tons of high-grade marijuana worth \$2.5 billion are found and destroyed. *Time* magazine calls this “the bust of the century” and it reveals the existence of Mexico's sophisticated marijuana smuggling industry. Caro Quintero will be arrested in 1985 and liberated by the current Mexican President's administration (Enrique Peña Nieto) on August 9, 2013. The U.S. demands he be imprisoned again, and a warrant for his arrest is issued on August 14, 2013. He flees.

1984, November 15\*: Jorge Ochoa, a member of the Medellin Cartel, is arrested in Spain.

1984, January 5\*: For the first time, Colombia extradites four drug traffickers to Miami. Within days, the U.S. becomes aware of a Medellin Cartel “hit list” which includes embassy members, their families, U.S. businessmen, and journalists.

1984: Cocaine transport routes begin to move into Mexico. Because of the South Florida Drug Task Force's successful crackdown on drugs, traffickers turn to Mexican marijuana smugglers to move cocaine across the 2,000 mile U.S.-Mexican border. By the mid-1980s it becomes the major transportation route for cocaine into the U.S.

1984, February: DEA agent Enrique Camarena is kidnapped and murdered in Mexico.

**For more information about [Enrique “Kiki” Camarena](#)**

1984, July 23: Bogota's Superior Court Judge Tulio Manuel Castro Gil, who had indicted Escobar, is assassinated as he climbs into a taxi.

1984, November 6: The M-19 guerrilla attacks the Colombian Palace of Justice. Colombian President Betancourt decides not to negotiate. Police and Military forces react violently, surrounding the palace and opening fire. At least 95 people are killed in the 27-hour siege, including 11 Supreme Court justices. Many court documents, including all pending extradition requests, are destroyed by fire.

1984: Crack, a potent form of smokeable cocaine developed in the early 1980s, begins to flourish in the New York region.

1986, June 19\*: The death of promising college basketball star Len Bias from a cocaine overdose stuns the nation.

1986, October 27: President Ronald Reagan signs The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, which appropriates \$1.7 billion to fight the drug crisis and includes the creation of mandatory minimum penalties for first time drug traffickers. The offense involving five kilograms of cocaine requires a mandatory minimum of ten years of jail time; but the offense involving of just five grams of crack leads to a mandatory minimum of five years in prison.

1986, November 18: The U.S. indicts the Medellin Cartel leaders.

1986, December 17: Murder of Guillermo Cano Isaza, editor-in-chief of daily *El Espectador* outrages Colombian press.

1987, February 3\*: Carlos Lehder, member of the Medellin Cartel, is captured and extradited to U.S. On May 19, 1988, Lehder is convicted of drug smuggling and sentenced to life in prison without parole, plus an additional 135 years.

1988, June 25: Colombia annuls extradition treaty.

1988, November 21\*: Jorge Ochoa, member of the Medellin Cartel, is arrested in Colombia. Twenty-four hours later, Juan Gomez Martinez, the editor of Medellin's daily *El Colombiano* is presented with a letter signed by "The Extraditables." They threaten to execute Colombian political leaders if Ochoa is extradited to U.S. On December 30, Ochoa is released.

1988, July 2\*: On the eve of the Mexican presidential election between ruling party, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and left-wing candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, two key Cárdenas aides are found shot to death in Mexico City. The two had been responsible for ensuring that the elections would be clean and fair. It is widely believed that Cárdenas actually won the election and that vote fraud by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the ruling party, was responsible for Salinas' victory.

1988: During the vote count, the government claims that the computers crashed, characterizing it as "a breakdown of the system". It is stated that Salinas de Gortari won with 50.7% of the votes, the lowest winning majority since direct elections were introduced in 1917. Years later, former president Miguel de la Madrid admits to the *New York Times* and in an autobiography that the presidential elections had been rigged to make PRI win, and that three years after the election, all ballots were burnt in order to remove all evidence of the fraud.

1988: At a meeting, President-elect Bush tells President-elect Salinas he must prove to the U.S. Congress that he is cooperating in the drug war—a process called certification. The U.S. pressures Mexico to arrest Miguel Angel Felix

Gallardo, the drug lord believed to have been responsible for the murder of DEA Agent Enrique Camarena.

1988: Mexico starts the second phase of its Economic State Reform. It involves deregulation of the financial sector, privatization of national industry, particularly railways, ports, highways, and communications. Banks are privatized and *campesinos* lose the right to claim lands or keep communal land. These changes especially affect small producers and spur growth in the informal sector. "We know that around 60% of the labour force or 'economically active population' is located in the informal sector" (Watt 162).

1988, February 5\*: Panama's President, Manuel Noriega, is indicted in U.S.

**For an [interview with Fernando Arenas](#), one of Carlos Lehder's pilots, describing Noriega's involvement with the Cartel**

1988\*: Office of National Drug Control Policy is created.

1989, April 8\*: Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo is arrested in Mexico. His nephews, the Arellano-Félix brothers inherit part of his drug-trafficking empire.

1989, April 14\*: The Kerry Commission, headed by John Kerry, releases congressional report on Contra-drug connection. The Contras were revolutionary commandos opposing the government in Nicaragua. It concludes that the Reagan administration ignored evidence of drug trafficking, human rights violations, and more than 1,300 terrorist attacks by the Contras and continued to provide them with aid.

**For more information about the [CIA-Contra Scandal](#)**

1989, August 18\*: Colombian Luis Carlos Galán, presidential candidate, is assassinated at a campaign rally. That evening, President Virgilio Barco Vargas issues an emergency decree reestablishing the policy of extradition. In response, the 'Extraditables' declare all-out war against the Colombian government, and begin a bombing/murder campaign that would last until January 1991.

1989, December 20\*: The U.S. invades Panama in order to capture the Panamanian President, Noriega. The invasion was named Operation Just Cause.

1990, January 25\*: Bush proposes adding an additional \$1.2 billion to the budget for the War on Drugs, including a 50% increase in military spending.

1991, January\*: All three Ochoa brothers, members of the Medellín Cartel, surrender to the Colombian police.

1991, June 19\*: New Colombian constitution bans extradition and that same day Pablo Escobar surrenders.

1991, November\*: While attempting to stop an air shipment of Colombian cocaine, Mexican Federal Police are killed by Mexican army members under payroll of the traffickers.

1991\*: Disregarding sovereignty, Mexican President Carlos Salinas allows DEA officers to conduct investigations on Mexican soil, although the regulations limit the number of agents in Mexico, designate certain cities in which they must live, deny the officers diplomatic immunity, require all information collected to be turned over to Mexican authorities, and prohibit agents to carry weapons.

1993, May 24\*: Cardinal Juan Posadas Ocampo, the archbishop of Guadalajara, is assassinated at the Guadalajara airport.

1993, November 17: The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, U.S., and Canada is passed and signed into law.

1993\*: The North American Free Trade Agreement, results in an enormous increase in legitimate trade across the U.S.-Mexico border. However, “neoliberalism had the effect of putting ever more small agriculturalists out of business while the burgeoning market for marijuana and poppies provided practically their only viable alternative to bankruptcy and flight from the land” (Watt 79).

1993, December 2\*: Pablo Escobar is killed by the Colombian police with the help of the U.S.

1995, May\*: The U.S. Sentencing Commission, which administers federal sentencing guidelines, releases a report which notes the racial disparities in cocaine vs. crack sentencing. The commission proposes reducing the discrepancy, but for the first time in history, Congress overrides their recommendation.

1995, Summer\*: Top Cali Cartel members arrested. The TV series *El Cartel de los Sapos* (English title: *The Cartel of Snitches*) is based on the experiences of a former drug dealer who worked with the Cali Cartel—first aired on June 4, 2008.

1996, July\*: The former members of the Medellin Cartel, Juan David and Jorge Luis Ochoa, are released after serving five-year prison sentences for drug trafficking. Later, their younger brother Fabio Ochoa is also released.

1997, September 24\*: A federal grand jury in San Diego indicts Ramón Arellano-Félix on charges of drug smuggling. The same day, he is added to the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List.

Incarceration rates in U.S. for drug offenses goes up almost 69%, from 50,000 in 1980 to 400,000 to 1997.

1998, May\*: Operation Casablanca, the largest money-laundering probe in U.S. history, leads to the indictment of three Mexican and four Venezuelan banks, and

167 individual arrests. Mexico and Venezuela are furious over the undercover operation, which they consider a threat to their national sovereignty.

1998, July\*: As a result of Mexico's anger about U.S. actions in Operation Casablanca, Attorneys General Janet Reno and Jorge Madrazo Cuellar draft the Brownsville Agreement. Both nations pledge to inform each other about sensitive cross-border law enforcement operations.

2000, May 11\*: The Arellano-Félix brothers are charged with ten counts of drug trafficking, conspiracy, money laundering and aiding and abetting violent crimes. The U.S. State Department offers a \$2 million reward for information leading to their arrest and conviction.

2000, August\*: President Clinton delivers \$1.3 billion in U.S. aid to fund 60 combat helicopters and training for the Colombian military to fight the War on Drugs, among other initiatives.

### **[[2006-2015]] The War on Drugs in Mexico (2006-September 2015)**

2006, September 7: The Familia Michoacana, an organized crime syndicate, throws five human heads onto the dance floor of a discotheque in Uruapan, Michoacán.

2006, November 25: Valentín Elizalde, a popular narco-corrido singer, is gunned down in an ambush.

2006, December 1: President Felipe Calderón, member of the right-wing National Action Party (PAN), assumes office amidst a controversial post-electoral process. Public opinion is divided regarding Calderón's legitimacy, given that he only obtained a 0.58% margin of victory over the left-wing candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

2006, December 11: The Mexican government launches Operation Michoacán against the Familia Michoacana, a joint effort involving the Secretariats of Defense, Navy and Public Security and the Attorney General's Office—even though the military was not constitutionally authorized to intervene.

2006, December: Mexico becomes the second country in the Americas after Colombia to militarize the drug war.

2007, January 2: The Mexican government launches Operation Baja California to fight the Tijuana Cartel (a.k.a. the Arellano-Félix organization) without any short term results.

2007, March 23: In a Maryland suburb the DEA arrests Zhenli Ye Gon, a trafficker of pseudoephedrine from Asia to Mexico. Earlier that month the Mexican police had found \$205 million in U.S. dollars and millions more in currencies from other countries in Ye Gon's residence in Mexico City. Ye Gon claims that Mexican authorities attempted to extort him to use this money for the PAN's electoral

campaigns, threatening him with the phrase: “either you cooperate with us or you are dead”.

2007, October 22: The U.S. and Mexico jointly announce the Merida Initiative (a.k.a. Plan México), a multi-year security cooperation agreement through which the U.S. government will provide financial assistance, equipment, training, and intelligence to Mexico and Central American countries to help them fight drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, and money laundering. The U.S. will give Mexico \$400 million and Central American countries \$65 million that year.

2008, January: The Mexican government launches the joint Operation Nuevo León-Tamaulipas in order to combat the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas Cartel—the latter is considered the most dangerous cartel, founded by former high-ranking officers of the Mexican army’s elite troops. The operation captures drug lord Arturo Beltrán Leyva of the Beltrán Leyva Cartel.

2008, March 27: The Mexican government launches the joint Operation Chihuahua to confront the Juárez Cartel and other criminal syndicates operating in the state.

2008, September 17: Operation Solare (a.k.a. Project Reckoning), a major transnational anti-drug trafficking operation across Mexico, Guatemala, Italy, and the United States, leads to the capture of over 200 suspects.

2008, October 26. The Mexican army captures Eduardo Arellano Félix, leader of the Tijuana Cartel, after a shootout in Tijuana, Baja California.

2008, November 7: The Federal Police arrests Jaime González Durán in Reynosa, Tamaulipas. He was a founding member of Los Zetas, founded by former high-ranking officers of the Mexican army’s elite troops.

2008, November 30: A clash between Guatemalan and Mexican drug cartels in the border zone leaves 18 people dead.

2009, January 22: Federal Police arrests Santiago Meza López a hit man for the Tijuana Cartel who claimed to have dissolved over 300 bodies in acid since the year 2000.

**For the short documentary (9.26 min) [Footnote](#) on the work Project RECO is doing about those disappeared by the Pozolero**

2009, February 17: A shootout in the city of Reynosa between the Mexican Army and members of the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas Cartel leads to the death of at least twelve people, among them the high-ranking Gulf Cartel leader Héctor Manuel Saucedo Gamboa. This was one of the events that will provoke the split between the Gulf Cartel and its paramilitary army, the Zetas in 2010.

2009, February 24: The DEA conducts Operation Xcellerator against Sinaloa Cartel drug traffickers. A total of 755 suspects are arrested across California,

Minnesota, and Maryland, and a couple of laboratories of illegal drugs are dismantled.

2009, February 25: *The New York Times* reports that according to the statistics of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), 90% of traced guns used by Mexican drug cartels originated in the United States.

2009, March 19: The Mexican military captures drug boss Vicente Zambada Niebla, son of Ismael Zambada, leader of the Sinaloa Cartel. Zambada Niebla is extradited to the United States in 2010 and becomes an informant for the DEA in exchange for immunity.

2009, May 27: Mexican authorities arrest 27 high-ranking officials suspected of collaborating with the Familia Michoacana, including eleven city mayors, fourteen civil servants, a judge, and an aide of the governor of Michoacán, in an episode known as the “michoacanazo”.

2009, July 7: Gunmen torture and murder Benjamin LeBaron along with his brother-in-law Luis Widmar at their house in Galeana, Chihuahua. Le Baron, a Mexican-American citizen, was an anti-crime activist and community leader.

2009, July 14: The Familia Michoacana kidnaps, tortures, and kills twelve Mexican Federal policemen in Michoacán in response to the detention of its leader, Arnaldo Rueda Medina, on July 11. During the investigation of these killings, Julio César Godoy, a representative of the Lower House in Congress and brother of the governor of Michoacán, proves to be a top-ranking member of the Familia Michoacana.

2009, September 3: Juarez Cartel hitmen attack a drug rehabilitation center in Ciudad Juarez killing at least seventeen patients. Thirteen days later the gunmen attack another center and murder another ten people.

2009, December 22: During an operation against Arturo Beltrán Leyva, 3<sup>rd</sup> Petty Officer Melquisedet Angulo Córdova of the Navy Special Forces is killed in action. Hours after his funeral, gunmen break into Córdova’s family house, killing four of his closest relatives.

2010, January: Federal Police arrests Carlos Beltrán Leyva, drug lord of the Beltrán Leyva Cartel, in Culiacán, Sinaloa, and Teodoro García Simentel, kingpin of the Tijuana Cartel in La Paz, Baja California Sur.

2010, January 31: Gunmen storm into a birthday party in Villas Salvárcar, Ciudad Juárez, killing sixteen teenagers and injuring twelve more. None of the teens had criminal ties. As a result of the public outcry, the Mexican government starts the program “We all are Juárez” aiming to reduce the homicide rate.

**For an investigation related to the [Villas Salvárcar Massacre](#)**

2010, March 19: Soldiers kill two graduate students from the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM) in Monterrey, Nuevo León, during

a gun battle against drug traffickers. The military alters the scene in an attempt to frame the grad students and smashes the security camera that recorded the event.

2010, May 31: Authorities remove 55 bodies from a mass grave in an abandoned mine near Taxco, Guerrero. It still isn't known who the victims were, who killed them or when they were buried, but few doubt that the dead were casualties of the drug related battles that have plagued the country.

2010, July 25: Mexican police exhume more than 70 bodies from clandestine mass graves in the metropolitan area of Monterrey, Nuevo León. Most of the victims were shot dead, while others showed signs of torture.

2010, August 24: In San Fernando, Tamaulipas, an armed confrontation between the Mexican army and members of the Zetas results in four dead and the discovery of the bodies of 72 immigrants inside a ranch. After more investigation, the final body count reaches 193, although some sources suggest that the government censored the actual data.

**For an investigation of the [San Fernando Massacre](#)**

2010, November 5: As a result of a gun battle between Mexican security forces and the Gulf Cartel in the border city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, more than 100 people die, among them the co-leader of the Gulf Cartel, Antonio Ezequiel Cárdenas Guillén.

2010, November 22: On the rural outskirts of Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, 77-year-old local entrepreneur Alejo Garza Tamez fights the Zetas, whom had demanded that he handed them over his ranch. Garza kills four gunmen and injures two, before he is killed too. He becomes a popular hero.

**To hear the corrido, ["Corrido a Don Alejo Garza Tamez"](#) composed in his honor**

2010, December 3: In Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexican authorities capture U.S. citizen Edgar Jiménez Lugo, a 14-year-old hit person from the South Pacific Cartel. He admits to taking part in the torture and mutilation of four people. After serving three years, he is deported to the U.S.

**For more on Jiménez Lugo's [arrest](#)**

2010, December 19: In the state of Puebla, a pipeline owned by the Mexican Petroleum company (PEMEX) explodes after members of the Zetas Cartel illegally attempt to siphon off oil. The explosion kills 28 people, injures 52, and damages over 115 homes.

2010, December 28: Around 60 gunmen storm the small indigenous town of Tierras Coloradas, Durango. The gunmen burn 40 houses, 27 cars, and an elementary school. Some locals are killed and over 200 have to flee the area.

2011, January: Mexican cartoonists Eduardo del Río “Rius” and Patricio Monero start the campaign No+Sangre (No More Blood) which takes over via social media.

## **#YaBasta #NoMasSangre**

2010, March: In Allende, Coahuila, Zetas commandos loot and destroy dozens of buildings, while kidnapping an estimated 300 people, who were never seen again. The massive crime goes unreported by the media.

### **For more on the [Allende Massacre](#)**

2010, March 11: First banners announcing the Caballeros Templarios Cartel (Knights Templar Cartel) appear. It is made from the remnants of the Familia Michoacana Cartel. They claim to have a strong ethical code which orders them to protect widows and orphans, prohibits drug use and killing for money and is against materialism.

2011, March 23: [The National Cannabis Trade Association](#) is formed in the U.S. It claims that the marijuana industry is worth \$1.7 billion dollars and should be recognized as a proper industry.

2011, March 29: Mexican police find the bodies of six men and one woman inside an abandoned car in an exclusive gated community in Temixco, Morelos. One of the victims is Juan Francisco Sicilia Ortega, son of the renowned poet and journalist Javier Sicilia. This crime unleashes a wave of outrage nationwide, demonstrates that most of the victims of the war are innocent civilians, deemed as “collateral damage” by the authorities. Javier Sicilia becomes the main promoter and leader of the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity.

### **Hear the poem Sicilia wrote for his son "[El mundo ya no es mundo de la palabra](#)"**

2011, April 6: Javier Sicilia summons 25,000 people to march in Cuernavaca, Morelos, where they subsequently camp outside the state government’s offices to demand an end to the War on Drugs. Sicilia also issues a call for a national silent march for peace. Hashtag #MXHastalamadre (Mexico is fed up) is created.

2011, April 15: The community of Cherán, Michoacán unites and kicks both politicians and drug traffickers out of their town. It forms a community government.

2011, May 5. The National March for Peace begins in Cuernavaca’s Peace Monument with 500 people walking and sharing stories about their experiences during the War on Drugs. Protestors walk to Mexico City, where the march eventually grows to 100,000 people. The march is carried out in 20 major cities

in Mexico, as well as 25 cities around the world, including Berlin, Paris, and Madrid.

**For more information on [The National March for Peace](#)**

2011, May 11: Presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto visits the Ibero-American University as part of his campaign. At the end of the conference he is asked about his role in the 2006 repression of activists in Atenco during his tenure as governor of the State of Mexico—state police cracked down local residents, resulting in two deaths, hundreds brutalized, and 26 women raped by police. Peña Nieto responds he did what was necessary and would do it again. Students protest out loud about his answer. Media outlets report that the protest was actually carried out by non-students. As a response to these claims, 131 students show their university ID in a Youtube video, verifying that they were actual students. This later gives life to the #YoSoy132 (I am 132) movement.

**For the [video](#) of the protest**

2011, May 14: In the state of Durango, the Mexican police exhume 340 bodies from numerous clandestine mass graves. All the bodies present signs of torture, and none been identified. Never have such massive killing fields been found in such a short time in Mexico - or anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, for that matter.

2011, June 9: The United States government arrests 127 U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents who were collaborating with the Mexican drug cartels.

2011, June: A self-appointed Global Commission on Drug Policy releases a report on the War on Drugs, declaring: “The global War on Drugs has failed, with devastating consequences for individuals and societies around the world. Fifty years after the initiation of the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, and years after President Nixon launched the U.S. government’s War on Drugs, fundamental reforms in national and global drug control policies are urgently needed.” The 19-member commission includes former world leaders such as ex-president of Brazil Fernando Henrique Cardoso; ex-president of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo; ex-president of Colombia, César Gaviria; President Reagan’s secretary of state, George Schultz; and former U.N. secretary general Koffi Annan.

2011, July 23: Mexican president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, as well as peace and human rights activists including the poet Javier Sicilia, gather in Mexico City to initiate a national discussion on the country’s military-led strategy against the drug cartels and the victims of the drug war.

2011, July 24: Since January, 19 Mexican chiefs of police have quit and 5 have been murdered. They were all involved in combating drug trafficking.

2011, August 12: In Mexico City the Mexican Police arrests Óscar García Montoya, supreme leader of the La Mano con Ojos Cartel. He confesses to having killed over 300 people himself, and to ordering the execution of 300 more.

2011, August 25: A well-armed commando group massacres 52 people, and injures over a dozen at a casino in Monterrey, Nuevo León. The gunmen doused the building entrances with gasoline and started a fire that trapped the people inside.

October 23: A U.S. official investigation reveals that from 2009 to 2011, under Operation *Fast and Furious* the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) allowed illegal gun sales to Mexican drug cartels, in order to track the sellers and purchasers. An estimated 1,400 weapons were lost by the ATF in Mexico.

### **For the full [Fast and Furious Documents](#)**

2012, October 7: The Mexican Navy allegedly kills Heriberto Lazcano, kingpin of the Zetas Cartel. An armed group takes his body from the funeral home.

2012, August-September: Mexican poet, Javier Sicilia, leads a U.S. *Caravan for Peace* to expose the War on Drug's human toll.

### **For an [interview](#) with Sicilia**

2012, December: Despite major irregularities in the presidential elections, Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) is elected as the 57<sup>th</sup> President of Mexico. Massive protests against his election spread throughout the country, including violent riots during Peña Nieto's inauguration on December 1.

2013, February 24: José Manuel Mireles, a medical doctor, and Hipólito Mora, a lemon grower from Michoacán, take up arms against the Caballeros Templarios Cartel and all criminal groups competing to take over the state. A number of self-defense militias emerge, and some of them initially collaborate with the Secretariat of National Defense.

### **A report on the [Self-Defense Forces](#)**

2013, June 6: The Mexican Army rescues 165 kidnapped immigrants from a safe house in Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Tamaulipas.

2013, August 2: Official reports indicate that more than 700 women have been killed, and more than 2,000 have disappeared in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, from 1993 to 2013.

2013, December 1: Mexican authorities unearth at least 70 bodies from clandestine mass graves in La Barca, Jalisco. While conducting an investigation for two missing police officers, almost two dozen police officers confessed to working with drug cartels and led agents to the gravesite.

2013, December 6: Following a massive excavation in the outskirts of Zapopan, Jalisco, Mexican authorities exhume a total of 17 bodies. The discovery of so many mass graves reveal Drug War's toll.

2014, January 1: U.S. official investigations reveal that in 2007 and 2008 the Sinaloa Cartel and a Colombian Cartel wire-transferred \$881 million in illegal drug proceeds into U.S. accounts. HSBC, Bank of America, Wachovia Bank, and JP Morgan are among the institutions allegedly involved in the money laundering.

2014, February 8: In the northern region of the state of Coahuila, Mexican authorities unearth the incinerated remains of over 500 people. In Coahuila alone, 1,600 people have been reported missing.

2014, February 19: Mexican authorities discover clandestine mass graves with at least 80 bodies in Gómez Farías, Tamaulipas, an area under the control of the Zetas. In 2013, more than 200 people were reported as disappeared in that region.

2014, March 20: The U.S. State Department reports that Mexican trafficking organizations have earned between \$19 and \$29 billion every year from selling illegal drugs in the United States.

2014, June 30: The Mexican Army executes 22 alleged gang members in a warehouse in Tlatlaya, State of Mexico. The National Human Rights Commission confirms that the victims were shot after they had surrendered.

**More on the [Tlatlaya Massacre](#)**

2014, June: Between January and June of 2014, nearly 70 kidnappings of U.S. citizens have been reported to the U.S. Embassy and consulates in Mexico.

2014, September 26: The municipal police of Iguala, Guerrero, along with the Guerreros Unidos Cartel kill six people and disappear 43 students of the Ayotzinapa Normal School. The Mexican Army is likely an accomplice.

**See the [Ayotzinapa Timeline](#) for more details of the crime and the reaction of the people all over the world during the first year of the disappearances.**

2014, October: At least 28 bodies are found in several clandestine mass graves in Iguala, Guerrero. None of them corresponded to the Ayotzinapa students.

2014, December 16: A non-official investigation reports that from 2006 to 2012, roughly 700 women have been killed in the State of Mexico.

2015, January: The Institute for Economics & Peace reports that Mexico ranks 144 out of 162 in the Global Peace Index, and indicates that the national cost of violence amounts to more than \$220 billion Dollars.

2015, January 6: The Mexican Army kills sixteen unarmed civilians in Apatzingán, Michoacán.

**For a report on the [Apantzingán Massacre](#)**

2015, January: U.S. President Obama backs the Mexican government amidst international complaints to suspend military aid—including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

2015, February 24: A Mexican official investigation claims that from 2000 to 2014, 103 journalists have been murdered and 25 disappeared.

2015, February 26: Mexican security forces capture Servando Gómez Martínez kingpin of the Knights Templar Cartel, in Morelia, Michoacán.

2015, July 11: Mexican druglord, Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán, escapes, for the second time, from a maximum-security prison. According to the official information, he used a mile-long tunnel built for him under the prison complex.

2015, July 13: As of now, 23 states of the U.S. have decriminalized or legalized cannabis to some degree. President Obama frees 46 non-violent drug federal inmates.

2015, July 27: While searching for the 43 disappeared students, a total of 60 mass graves have been discovered in Iguala, Guerrero, with a total of 129 bodies. None of the remains have been linked to the students.

This timeline ends here.

by **Edith Beltrán Mínehan** with collaboration from **Adela Cedillo** and **Axolote**