

# OUR VOICE

Four months into 2010, the news in Mexico has been full of alarming reports of the country's growing insecurity. As a result of the struggle over territorial control among the drug cartels and their violent reaction to President Felipe Calderón's frontal strategy to fight them, altogether the confrontations have made for about 3,000 executions so far this year.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the size of the country, most of the population still leads a normal life; however, a general state of disquiet is beginning to emerge in the face of the ominous signs of focal points of violence throughout the country.

The complexity of understanding the circumstances that led Mexico to its current state of affairs cannot leave out decisive elements. While the declining purchasing power of wages and the collapse of the job market seem related to the structural change in economic policy that began three decades ago, the 2008 world debacle yet again undermines the possibilities for creating new equilibriums.

The adverse conditions that millions of Mexicans are dealing with can be exemplified in figures by the place we occupy on the United Nations' Human Poverty Index.<sup>2</sup> The report for 2009 indicates that 7 percent of the Mexican population is illiterate; the country is forty-eighth among 150 nations in terms of the population's access to pure drinking water; and, as an indicator of health care and good nutrition, the number of people who do not live past 40 is high, as is the number of children under five suffering from malnutrition.

The concentration of income adds to the ominous inequality we are experiencing, since the richest 10 percent of homes concentrate 36.3 percent of all income, while the poorest 10 percent of homes survive on 1.7 percent.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *El Universal*, [www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas](http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas), May 10, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Human Development Report 2009, Mexico*, [http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_MEX.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MEX.html), accessed May 11, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> *CIA World Fact Book* (2008), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html>, accessed May 11, 2010.

Considering that the gradual deterioration of Mexico and growing criminality are not a problem that involves this country's population and government alone, since both their origins and repercussions have to do with both internal and external conditions, we can say at this point that not only the United States and Canada, as our regional partners, but also the entire international community have begun to react and search for lasting responses that will counter the power accumulated by the global networks of organized crime.

In the midst of this scenario, the Mexican political class, although it agrees on the gravity of the situation, has not been able to come to an agreement about what it wants from the National Security Law. Much less has it been able to agree on the kind of alliance the governments of the United States and Mexico should forge to create a common front.

In this issue of *Voices of Mexico*, we present our readers with the viewpoints of several experts who analyze the context of insecurity in the country, in addition to the position of U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Carlos Pascual, who talks about bilateral relations *vis-à-vis* security. Dr. Kurt Schelter has made a significant contribution to this issue about the urgent need to explore alternatives for the region's future, exemplified in the European Union's Schengen model.

We also include a series of articles dealing with the diversity of the National Autonomous University of Mexico's cultural patrimony in a year when we Mexicans celebrate not only the centennial of the UNAM as a modern institution, but also the bicentennial of our independence and the 100-year anniversary of the Mexican Revolution.

With this panorama in mind, our wish is that the festive vocation that characterizes us culturally as Mexicans can inspire us to a renewed enthusiasm for overcoming our problems, leading us to a profound reflection to review our achievements as a nation, but, above all, to recognize our failures and commit ourselves to overcoming them.

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