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TEXAS
The University of Texas at Austin

THE DANGERS OF DOING JOURNALISM IN TAMAULIPAS

Harassment, violence or death: the challenges of covering organized crime and corruption in northeastern Mexico

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The research project

- Addresses the hazards of doing journalism in Tamaulipas
- The approaches employed are those of the violence against reporters who cover crime, corruption and local stories
- The challenges journalists face to adapt to new ways of doing their work
- Evidence is presented through cases collected during the winter of 2024, through ethnographic methods

Tamaulipas facts

- Has a position to play a key role in drug trafficking and human smuggling
- More border crossings into the United States than any other Mexican state (18)
- 3 of the 10 busiest Border Crossings in USA (Laredo, Hidalgo, Brownsville)

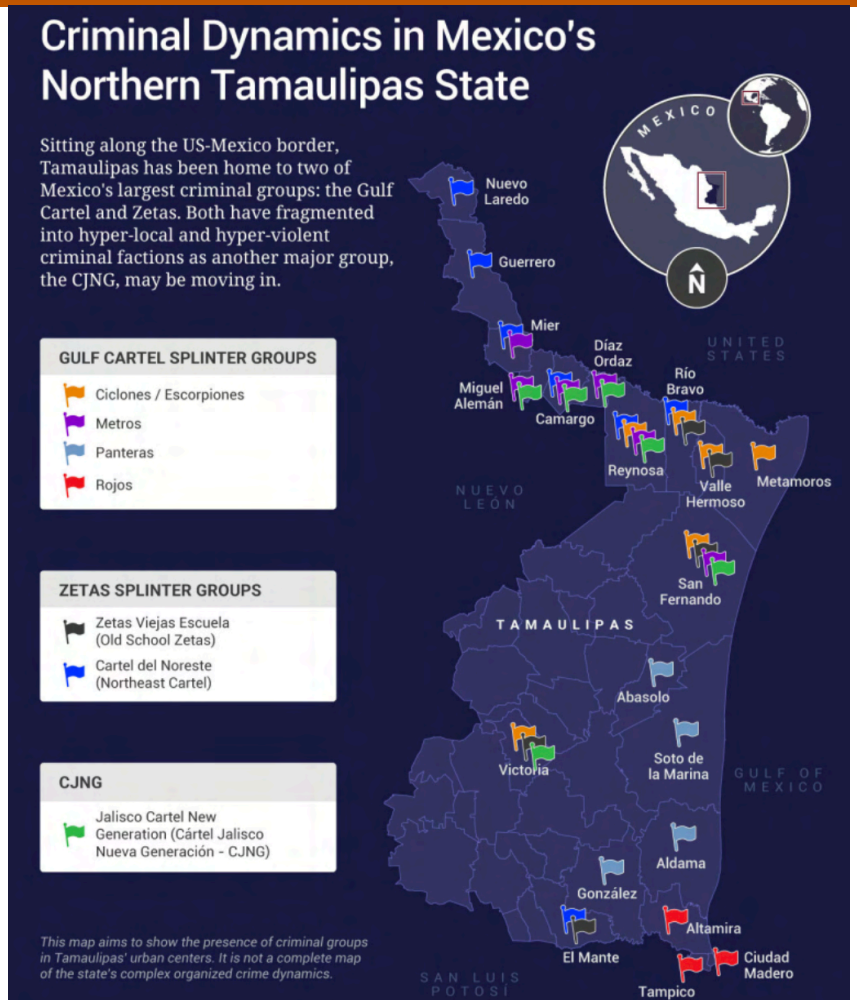

ngeles
ARIZONA
NEW MEXICO
UNITED STATES
Phoenix
Dallas
Diego, CA
Calexico, CA
Tijuana
Mexicali
Tucson
Nogales, AZ
Nogales
El Paso, TX
Ciudad Juarez
TEXAS
BAJA CALIFORNIA
SONORA
Austin
Houston
Eagle Pass, TX
CHIHUAHUA
Piedras Negras
San Antonio
Laredo, TX
Colombia
COAHUILA
Nuevo Laredo
McAllen, TX
Reynosa
NUEVO LEON
Brownsville, TX
Matamoros
MEXICO
Gulf of California
Monterrey
BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR
SINALOA
DURANGO

The drug cartels influence

- The Cartel del Golfo (CDG), funded in Matamoros, controls criminal economies since the 1930s
- Capture and killing of leaders/feuds with the Zetas changed the cartels dynamics
- Instability has become cyclical, which lead up to more violence

Criminal Dynamics in Mexico's Northern Tamaulipas State

Sitting along the US-Mexico border, Tamaulipas has been home to two of Mexico's largest criminal groups: the Gulf Cartel and Zetas. Both have fragmented into hyper-local and hyper-violent criminal factions as another major group, the CJNG, may be moving in.




TELEMUNDO
AL ROJO VIVO


La Jornada


PERIODO DEL 01/01/2000 00:00 HRS AL 02/04/2024 00:00 HRS
ESTATUS DE LA PERSONA: PERSONAS DESAPARECIDAS Y NO LOCALIZADAS, RANGO DE FECHAS DE HECHOS: 01/01/2000 - 02/04/2024
Baja California
Sonora
Chihuahua
Coahuila
Baja California Sur
Sinaloa
Nuevo León
Durango
• Personas
Tamaulipas: 11 747
Zacatecas
San Luis Potosí
Aguascalientes
Nayarit
Guanajuato
Querétaro
Hidalgo
Jalisco
México
Tlaxcala
Colima
Michoacán
Morelos
Puebla
Veracruz
Guerrero
Oaxaca
Chiapas
Tabasco
Campeche
Yucatán
Quintana Roo


Fosas clandestinas halladas en México
Periodo: 2006 a 2018
Baja California
Sonora
Chihuahua
Coahuila
Baja California Sur
Sinaloa
Nuevo León
Durango
Tamaulipas
Fosas: 402
Tamaulipas
Zacatecas
San Luis Potosí
Nayarit
Aguascalientes
Guanajuato
Yucatán
Jalisco
Hidalgo
Quintana Roo
Estado de México
Campeche
Colima
Michoacán
Morelos
Puebla
Tabasco
Veracruz
Guerrero
Oaxaca
Chiapas


Fosas clandestinas halladas en México
Periodo: 01 de diciembre de 2018 al 30 de abril de 2023
Rango: 01/12/2018 a 30/04/2023
Baja California
Sonora
Chihuahua
Coahuila
Baja California Sur
Sinaloa
Nu
Tamaulipas
Fosas: 152
Durango
Tamaulipas
Zacatecas
Nayarit
Yucatán
Jalisco
Hidalgo
Campeche
Tlaxcala
Michoacán
Puebla
Veracruz
Guerrero
Oaxaca
Chiapas




CNB

Impact of the violence on journalism

- 162 journalists have been killed in Mexico from 2000 to 2023 (0 in USA)
- 2022 was the deadliest year for journalists in Mexico, with 13 killings.
- Tamaulipas is the second Mexican state with the most journalists killed (16)

Source: https://articulo19.org/periodistasasesinados/

Causes of violence against journalists

- 70's: Threats came from political and union power and local bosses.
- 80's: Organized crime joined the harassment of media/journalists.
- 90's/2000's: Tamaulipas was catalogued as the main zone of silence in Mexico.

Source: "Tamaulipas, the construction of silence."-Martha Olivia López Medellín- CPJ 2014







Violence against journalists (2010-2020)

- Narcos started using more violent tactics to get their point/message across
- Express kidnappings, beatings, stabbings, assault and death threats
- Attacks to newspapers/radio stations/tv stations
- Use of grenades, firearms and car bombs


ALTO
FEDERAL

- Acepta el gobernador que “en algunas zonas” su administración ya fue rebasada por el crimen

Zetas, posibles culpables de explosiones de dos coches bomba en Tamaulipas

- Los estallidos, en instalaciones de Televisa y Tránsito de Ciudad Victoria; no hay heridos



Trabajadores de Televisa en Ciudad Victoria informaron que la explosión del coche bomba cimbró las casas en varias cuadras a la redonda. Las fuerzas policiacas cerraron las calles para evitar el paso de vecinos **Foto Reuters**

De la redacción

Periódico La Jornada
Sábado 28 de agosto de 2010, p. 11

Ciudad Victoria, Tamps., 27 de agosto. La capital de Tamaulipas vivió hoy horas de tensión y zozobra. En los primeros minutos de este viernes estallaron dos coches bomba frente a las instalaciones de Televisa, en la colonia Sosa, y de la Dirección de Tránsito

El *cártel* de *Los Zetas* es el posible responsable de hacer estallaar los dos autos bomba en instalaciones de Televisa y de la Dirección de Tránsito Municipal en Ciudad Victoria, de acuerdo con información obtenida de funcionarios que participan en el gabinete de seguridad nacional.

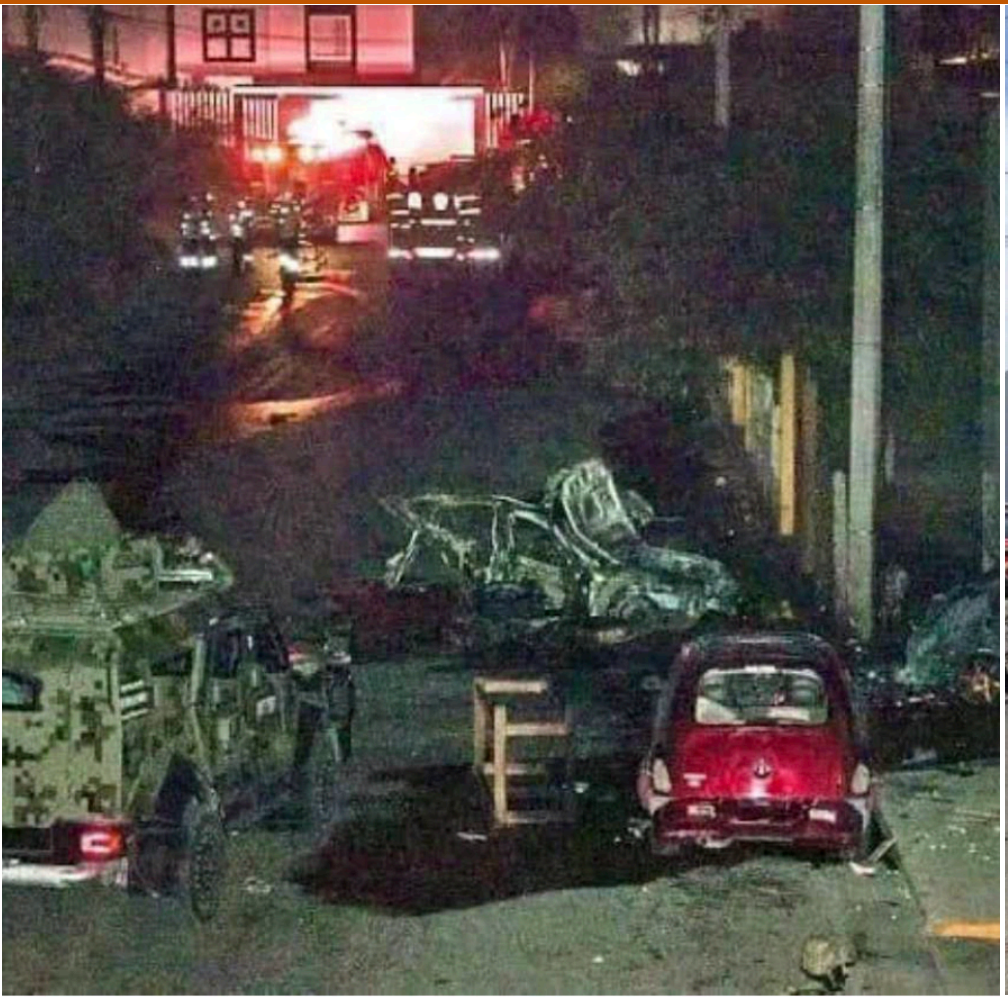
La PGR empezó una averiguación previa por violación a la Ley Federal

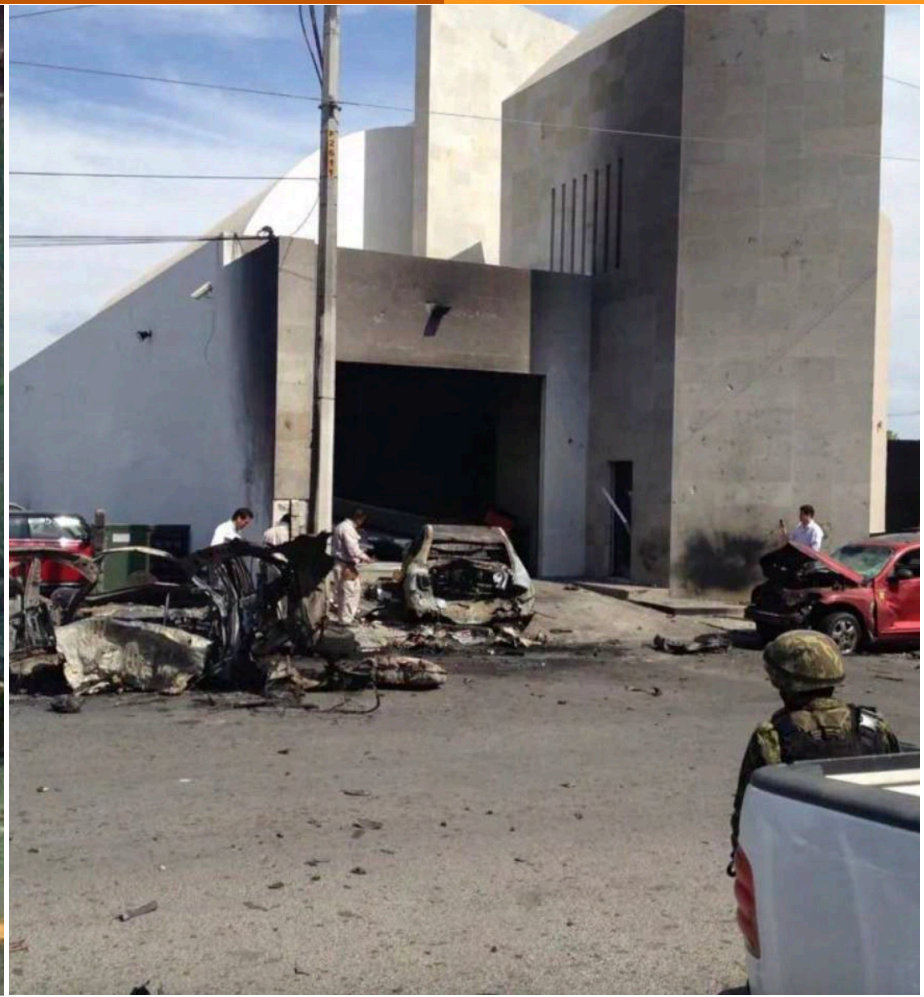
Estalla coche frente a Policía de Cd. Victoria



Alrededor de las 15:00 horas de hoy, una nueva tragedia se registró en el estado de Tamaulipas, ya que un coche bomba explotó en Ciudad Victoria.

NOTIMEX 15 MAR 2011 - 18:02






Explota coche bomba en Periódico Expreso
· No hay muertos, sólo daños materiales
· Área de talleres afectada
· Se va la luz en algunas calles
M
22:05

The official response

- Local and federal authorities are often slow to respond.
- Fail to apply best practices to evidence gathering.
- Appear to prioritize presenting suspects ASAP, rather than conducting a thorough investigation.

Source: “In 2022, journalist killings continue unabated in Mexico amid a climate of impunity.” - CPJ

What's most discouraging for journalists?

- Citizens don't acknowledge the risk they assume to cover drug-trafficking stories.
- Society don't trust them/they consider media to be another political institution.
- Journalists branded as sellouts

Source: "They don't trust us; they don't care if we're attacked: Trust and risk perception in Mexican journalism."/ Communication & Society, 32(1), 147-160. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.32.37820

When violence threatens democracy

- Violence against journalists violates freedom of expression and citizens' right to information
- Consolidates zones of silence/Journalists cannot inform about problems of the community
- Represents profound risks for the democratic life of Mexico and the region, which includes Texas.

Source: "They don't trust us; they don't care if we're attacked": Trust and risk perception in Mexican journalism. Communication & Society, 32(1), 147-160. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.32.37820

Research Project Mellon Fellowship

- How are journalists in Tamaulipas doing their work?
- What are some of the challenges they face?
- Have they received help from the government and what does that mean?

The research project

- Used data from in-depth qualitative interviews with 15 individuals
- 10 journalists, 2 college professors, 2 government officials and 1 activist
- 6 men and 4 women, ages 45-65, middle class, from Tamaulipas

The findings

- Journalists apply self-censorship, self-care and resilience
- Prefer to rely often on press releases, press conferences and transparency tools
- Work in units to protect themselves: detrimental to independent journalism

The findings

- Newspapers have stopped publishing stories about violence
- Websites often stay away from beats that could be dangerous
- Editors talk to the competition before they publish a story

The findings

- Some journalists have opted out of their profession because it's too risky/stressful
- Teachers/government officials/political parties/ private sector
- Have decided to open YouTube channels or work for national/international media

The findings

- Journalists distrust government officials and institutions/avoid asking them for help
- Some have concerns about what they share with other colleagues
- Explore moving out of state and pursue a less stressful job

The Government response

- Created workshops and conferences for journalists
- Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists
- Open Door Policy that would gain back trust

What's next for journalism?

- "New generations want to be influencers and care a lot about engagement."
- "Media would need to adapt to new generations or they would become obsolete."

Mauricio Z., newspaper editor/blogger in Ciudad Victoria

What's next for journalism?

- "Only a few newspapers would survive and the rest would become websites."
- "Newsrooms would become irrelevant."

Pedro G., newspaper editor in Tamaulipas

What's next for journalism?

- Investigative journalism would only be possible in collaboration with national/international outlets
- Local TV stations would become irrelevant/ mostly cover national issues
- Radio stations would stick mostly to music programming/content

What's next for journalism?

- "We don't wanna leave our state and our city, the narcos should not win and take control of the state."

Marco E., website editor in Tamaulipas

What's next for journalism?

- "It's gonna take a lot of creativity, sacrifice and commitment to keep doing our job."

Maria J., multimedia journalist, Tamaulipas

What's next for journalism?

- "I'm not a hero and I put my family first even though I love journalism."

Marco V., newspaper columnist in Tamaulipas

What needs to change?

- “Changing course will require enormous effort in tandem with the will of all sectors of society.”
- The government should fully fund laws that provide protections for journalists.

Source: “Surviving Mexico: Resistance and Resilience among Journalists in the Twenty-First Century.” /Celeste González de Bustamante and Jeannine E. Relly.

The core values of journalism

- “Addressing problems is important, but equally crucial is showcasing existing solutions
- It demonstrates people’s awareness and active efforts to fix the issues (local, national or international)
- Provides inspiration and tools for young readers who may feel the world is doomed.”

Juliette Gerbais, project assistant European Journalism Centre

The core values of journalism

- “The primary goal of solutions journalism is not to make people feel good, although it’s great impact when that happens: Its goal is to inform people better.”

Nina Fasciaux Director, Partnerships & Fellowships, Solutions Journalism Network

The victims in Tamaulipas

- Luis Cruz Martínez (Reynosa, February 2000)
- Pablo Pineda Gaucín (Matamoros, April 2000)
- Saúl Martínez (Matamoros, March 2001)
- Félix Fernández (Miguel Alemán, January 2002)
- Roberto Mora (Nuevo Laredo, March 2004)
- Francisco Arratia (Matamoros, August 2004)
- Dolores García (Nuevo Laredo, April 2005)
- Ramiro Téllez (Nuevo Laredo, March 2006)
- Francisco Ortiz (Camargo, February 2008)
- Jorge Rábago Valdéz (Reynosa, March 2010)
- Alberto Guajardo (Matamoros, November 2010)
- Elizabeth Macías (Nuevo Laredo, September 2011)
- Mario Chávez (Ciudad Victoria, June 2013)
- Carlos Domínguez (Nuevo Laredo, January 2018)
- Héctor González Antonio (Ciudad Victoria, May 2018)
- Antonio de la Cruz (Ciudad Victoria, June 2022)



Héctor González Antonio



Antonio de la Cruz Martínez

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QUESTIONS?

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