

# **A manifesto in support of Ciudad Juárez and its efforts to reduce the violence related to drug trafficking**

## **Spring 2010**

We, the undersigned, U.S. citizens and residents of El Paso, Texas, express our profound concern and dismay regarding the absence of public safety, the near-complete breakdown of the rule of law, and the humanitarian catastrophe in our neighboring city of Ciudad Juárez. The terror that now confronts the residents of Juárez, most of it a consequence of the climate of lawlessness created by drug trafficking, is endangering the future peace and prosperity of our binational region.

### **The tragic facts**

Since 2006 the level of violence has been unprecedented, and Juárez has become one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Over 1,600 people were killed in Juárez in 2008, nearly 2,700 in 2009, and 2010 is on track to equal or exceed previous records. Since 2008 over 150 children under the age of 18 have been slain, including toddlers caught in the crossfire. Criminals acting with impunity have savagely raped, tortured, and executed hundreds of young women, disposing of their mutilated bodies in the desert surrounding Juárez. In 2009 there were 16,000 car thefts, of which 1,900 were classified as carjackings. In addition, disappearances, kidnappings, extortions, arsons, assaults, and rapes have become a daily occurrence.<sup>1</sup>

The uncontrolled violence has devastated the economy of Juárez and seriously disrupted daily life. The dangerous climate has contributed in a significant way to a steep drop in new investment of capital, to diminishing productivity, to the closure of over 11,000 businesses, and to massive unemployment. Between 100,000 to 200,000 people have abandoned the city, with over 116,000 homes left vacant and many of them vandalized. At least 30,000 of the refugees have moved to El Paso.

### **Why El Pasoans should care**

It is in the interest of El Paso to assist in all ways possible to quell the violence in Juárez. The two communities, which functionally constitute one city, are deeply dependent on each other. Many El Pasoans commute regularly to work in Juárez, to visit relatives, to shop, and to get medical and dental care. Many tuition-paying students from Juárez cross the border daily to attend El Paso elementary and secondary schools, as well as institutions of higher learning. The intense interaction between our two cities means an overall annual economic impact of well over \$2 billion in El Paso. Juarenses annually spend over \$1.2 billion in El Paso, and over 60,000 jobs in our city rely upon the Juárez maquiladoras and other economic activity.

### **The underlying cause of the violence**

It is well documented that much of the Juárez violence is fueled by the various drug wars – those between cartels, those within cartels, and those between cartels and the governments of the U.S. and Mexico – wars that take the lives of members of drug trafficking organizations and those innocent of any involvement. El Pasoans need to participate with our own government as well as with our neighbors toward finding a pragmatic and workable solution that ends the violence and restores order, law, and justice.

We can no longer afford to deny the overwhelming role that U.S. consumption of drugs plays in fueling the violence in Juárez and elsewhere in Mexico, or ignore that illicit cash and arms flows from the United States into Mexico play a direct and powerful role in sustaining the cartels and in the massive killing of people in our neighboring city.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics cited in this manifesto are based on official and unofficial data widely reported in the media.

## Call to action

It is time to recognize that the U.S. 40-year War on Drugs has been a dismal social, economic and policy failure. It has not achieved any of its goals and narco-related violence along the U.S.-Mexico border is raging at unprecedented levels with no end in sight. We join many prominent Americans, including ex-U.S. secretaries of state George Shultz and James Baker, U.S. Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman, ex-presidents of Mexico Vicente Fox and Ernesto Zedillo, ex-president of Colombia César Gaviria, and ex-president of Brazil Fernando Enrique Cardoso in calling for a comprehensive revamping of the failed War on Drugs waged by the United States and other countries.

- We support a well-funded and aggressive U.S. national educational campaign to encourage people to refrain from the use of illegal drugs by connecting their use to cartel-related terror.
- We support increased emphasis on treating substance abuse, including the building of more substance abuse facilities
- We support U.S. drug policy initiatives that do not result in wasting government funds and empowering criminal gangs and trafficking organizations.
- We advocate, as an important first step in drug reform, the repeal of the ineffective U.S. marijuana drug laws in favor of regulating, controlling and taxing the production, sale and consumption of marijuana by adults. The sale of marijuana in the U.S. black market contributes 50 to 70 percent of Mexico's cartel revenues.
- We oppose unsuccessful militaristic approaches and demand that any future U.S. aid involve a rigorous accounting of allegations of human rights abuses and have strict performance metrics.
- We support U.S. aid that is tied to social, educational and economic development in Mexico and support that country's fight to establish effective and just rule of law.
- We call on the U.S. government to properly and without bias make decisions on applications from Mexicans seeking asylum from the violence in Mexico, as well as make use of other existing avenues available under U.S. law to ensure that all asylum seekers whose lives are in danger are not unjustly rejected.

Between 18,000 and 23,000 Mexicans have been killed since 2006, when Mexico's calamitous War on Drugs began.

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In 2009, more El Pasoans were killed in Juárez than in El Paso.

Massacres of a large groups and discoveries of mass graves of murdered victims have become frequent occurrences in Juárez since the late 1990s.

The late Walter Cronkite and Ann Landers are among many prominent Americans who have questioned the effectiveness of drug policies in the United States.

## CIUDAD JUÁREZ SUPPORT NETWORK (partial list)

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