

GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX 2025: MEXICO FACTSHEET

OVERALL GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX SCORE:

HIGH RISK

The Global Torture Index 2025 is the first analysis designed to assess the risk of torture and ill-treatment across 26 countries worldwide. This 2025 factsheet for Mexico includes an analysis of the country's overall performance, a breakdown by thematic pillars and key recommendations for driving meaningful change in the fight against torture and the promotion of human rights.

COLLABORATING ORGANISATIONS IN MEXICO:

Documenta, Análisis y acción
para la justicia A.C.

Red Nacional de Peritos y Expertos
Independientes Contra la Tortura

Centro de Justicia para la Paz
y el Desarrollo A.C. (CEPAD)

Fundar, Centro de
Análisis e Investigación

AT A GLANCE

In Mexico, torture is a widespread practice that occurs in a context of impunity, replacing due process. Among other purposes, it has been used as a method of investigation, obtaining confessions and incriminating culprits. For 2025, the Global Torture Index classifies the country as facing a **high risk** of torture and ill-treatment, based on data collected in 2023 and 2024. In addition, certain legal frameworks and institutions have contributed to the persistence of this phenomenon, including arbitrary detentions, *arraigo*¹, unofficial pre-trial detention and the State's lack of will and capacity to investigate and prosecute those responsible.

According to information from the Technical Secretariat for Combating Torture of the Federal Public Defender's Office, **2,881 cases of torture were reported between 2019 and 2024, with 3,506 victims.**

Torture is common during the first stages of detention and is closely related to the fabrication of illicit evidence. According to information from National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI)'s 2021 National Survey of the Population Deprived of Liberty (hereinafter ENPOL 2021), a significant proportion of acts of torture committed by security forces occur during transfer to the jurisdictional authorities.

¹ Arraigo is a federal preventive measure to detain people suspected of belonging to organized crime for up to 80 days.
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1141762>

Torture is commonly used to extract confessions and present them as evidence in court. Data from ENPOL 2021 reveals a consistent pattern of generating illicit evidence: **42% of incarcerated individuals reported being beaten or ill-treated at the public prosecutor's office to incriminate themselves or admit to false claims, while 22% said they were coerced into incriminating others. Additionally, 20% stated they pleaded guilty following physical assault.**

The fabrication of guilty pleas reflects a selective application of the rule of law that has shattered countless lives. It also points to the existence of a state policy or plan to arbitrarily detain innocent individuals, blatantly violating fundamental norms of international law in an effort to inflate detention figures amid a crisis of insecurity and extreme violence.

GENERAL INFORMATION



Type of government:
Federal Republic



United Nations Convention Against Torture:
Ratified



OPCAT ratification:
Ratified



Population:
131.687.120



People deprived of liberty:
242,457



Prison population (per 100,000 of national population):
180



Pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners (percentage of prison population):
38.2%



Documented Detained Human Rights Defenders:
10



Alerts Issued by the Observatory for Human Rights Defenders in 2024:
9



Prison Occupancy level:
108.3%



Homicide rate (per 100.000 people):
24.9 (2023)

THEMATIC PILLAR OVERVIEW



I. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

INDEX SCORE: CONSIDERABLE RISK

Mexico is a party to numerous international human rights instruments and has accepted most individual communications procedures under UN treaty bodies. However, **it has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child** in a communications procedure. To date, the UN Committee against Torture has issued four decisions concerning Mexico, but their implementation continues to face significant delays and shortcomings. Moreover, the **dialogues between government authorities and civil society organisations regarding the implementation of the Concluding Observations adopted by the Committee against Torture is very limited.**

On 26 June 2017, the [General Law to Prevent, Investigate and Punish Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Mexico](#) (General Law against Torture, GLT) was published. This law has been an important tool for victims and survivors of torture in the country. However, eight years after its adoption, **its implementation remains plagued by serious delays and shortcomings**. These include: (1) a lack of capacity, resources and autonomy within specialised prosecutors' offices to effectively investigate torture; (2) the non-functioning of the Technical Committee of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, which hinders the mechanism's ability to carry out its mandate; and (3) persistent obstacles to excluding evidence obtained under torture, despite the law's explicit requirement to do so. One of the main barriers is the continued practice by judges of admitting coerced confessions on the basis that the victim failed to prove they were tortured.

Regarding the National Programme to Prevent and Punish Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (PNT), established under the General Law against Torture (GLT), it is important to note that **after nearly three years of litigation led by civil society organisations that document cases of torture and support victims in Mexico**, a court issued a ruling requiring the Attorney General's Office (FGR) to publish the Programme. The PNT is a key instrument outlined in the Law to guide the development and implementation of targeted public policies for the prevention, investigation, prosecution, punishment and eradication of torture. The Attorney General's Office was legally required to publish the Programme by December 2017 but has failed to do so.

Even though Mexico has a law to prevent, investigate and punish torture, its Constitution maintains provisions that are contrary to its international human rights obligations, such as **the concepts of unofficial pre-trial detention and arraigo**. Both concepts [have been rejected by various international bodies](#) specialising in human rights for being conducive to arbitrary detention and torture. Despite encouraging the State to repeal them, these concepts remain embedded in Mexico's legal framework.

Various civil society organisations consider the performance of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) to be highly deficient, particularly during the administration period of 2019 to 2023, highlighting significant compromises to its autonomy and independence.



II. ENDING POLICE BRUTALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

In Mexico, the **deployment of military forces for public security duties at the federal, state and municipal levels has been a constant since the launch of the so-called 'War on Drugs' in 2006**. Since then, numerous civil society organisations and international human rights bodies have documented and condemned serious abuses committed by the armed forces, including arbitrary detentions, torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions. Psychological pressure, such as verbal abuse, threats and intimidation, is frequently used during the apprehension, search and detention of suspected individuals.

Despite the severe consequences of Mexico's militarised approach to public security, **the government established the National Guard in 2019—an institution composed primarily of military personnel**. According to [the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, which visited Mexico in September 2023](#), the creation of this institution, composed of army and navy personnel, **reflects the deep involvement of the military in policing functions**.

According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), [the constitutional reform that established the National Guard](#) as a permanent public security force is problematic. The National Guard is composed of military personnel with police training and is attached to the Ministry of National Defence. This structure is not consistent with the recommendations and [statements of international human rights bodies](#) which call for the demilitarisation of citizen security in Mexico.

In September 2024, the [Mexican State informed the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights \(the IACHR\)](#) that **133,102 members of the National Guard were deployed nationwide, performing police, public security and migration control duties**. This militarised presence has been closely **linked to increased violence against detainees, disappearances, torture and homicides**. According to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, individuals detained by military personnel are often subjected to severe violence and torture.

Mexico also continues to face major problems in protecting the right to life. According to Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre, A.C. (Centro Prodh), using data obtained via the National Transparency Platform for its report [Poder Militar](#), the National Guard **applied force in 421 incidents between July 1, 2018, and July 5, 2023—including the use of firearms in 411 cases**. The National Guard had also **killed 94 people by 2021**. Extrajudicial executions by the National Guard and Armed Forces have been documented since 2019.

In practice, individuals held in temporary detention centres do not have effective access to administrative or criminal mechanisms to report cases of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CIDTP). The judiciary rarely convicts those responsible, and when a guilty verdict is issued, the punishment imposed by the State is often inadequate and disproportionate to the severity of the crime.

Some incidents include the killing of a four-year-old girl in the [state of Tamaulipas in August 2022](#); the fatal shooting of [a student from the University of Guanajuato](#), in April 2022; and [the death of two young people](#) in the state of Chihuahua in January 2023.



III. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE WHILE DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

The [UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture visited Mexico in December 2016](#). During its visit, numerous individuals deprived of liberty—including women, minors and migrants—reported having been subjected to torture and/or ill-treatment, particularly at the time of arrest, during transfers, upon entry to detention facilities or during interrogation. According to [ENPOL 2021](#), **34.5% of persons deprived of their liberty reported having been physically assaulted by guards**.

The [Committee against Torture, in the framework of its review of Mexico in 2019](#), expressed concern about the high number of people in pre-trial detention, sometimes for extremely long periods of time. According to information from the IACHR in its [2024 Annual Report](#), the number of people held in pre-trial detention in Mexico is over 35%.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in the framework of [its visit to Mexico in September 2023](#), observed that in some prisons at federal and state level, detainees remain locked in their cells for most of the day and rarely leave the cell block in which they are housed. The Working Group also noted that solitary confinement as punishment **is applied for up to 15 days for misconduct and even identified cases of solitary confinement for more than 30 days**. Corporal punishment, collective punishment and the prohibition of family contact are also frequently applied.

In 2007, the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (MNPT) was created as part of the National Human Rights Commission. According to information from the [Observatory Against Torture](#), the **MNPT filed 86 criminal complaints in 2023 with federal and state prosecutors** for acts of torture or ill-treatment in deprivation of liberty. In 2022, the MNPT **carried out 300 visits to places of deprivation of liberty throughout the country**. Despite the efforts of civil society organisations to strengthen the NPM through dialogues for cooperation, the Mechanism, as identified by the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture during its visit in 2016, has failed to differentiate itself from the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH). The CNDH, for its part, faces a **profound crisis of legitimacy in the face of clear demonstrations of a lack of independence and impartiality** since 2019, in contravention of the Paris Principles.

Regarding the situation of women deprived of their liberty in detention centres, in recent years the civil society organisation Documenta A.C., as well as the Federal Institute of Public Defence, have documented a series of practices that violate **the rights of the 1,157 women who are deprived of their liberty in the only federal penitentiary centre for women in the country**, the *Centro Federal de Readaptación Social número 16 CPS Morelos* (Cefereso 16). Both Documenta and the Instituto de la Defensoría Pública have documented serious conditions of isolation and lack of medical care in this centre, which have created a torturous environment for the women.

Deaths in custody are frequent, particularly among women and children. From 2021 to February 2025, **21 deaths in custody were registered in Cefereso 16**. In 2023, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) issued a recommendation concerning the violation of thirteen women's human rights. **The women took their own lives while in custody at the centre** because of serious deficiencies in medical care and other factors that have contributed to the increase in cases classified as suicide. Faced with this situation, the Federal Institute of Public Defence obtained a ruling in March 2025 in which a judge ordered that the right to mental healthcare and other rights of women deprived of their liberty at the centre be guaranteed.

With regard to the situation experienced by persons on the move, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, in the framework of its [review of Mexico in April 2025](#), regretted the lack of adequate investigation and determination of responsibility by the highest level authorities who continue to exercise their functions in relation to the events surrounding the fire that occurred on 27 March 2023 in the detention centre 'migration station' in Ciudad Juarez, in which dozens of migrants died and a larger number were injured. So far, the Mexican state has not adopted measures to guarantee the non-repetition of the events in immigration detention centres, nor has it investigated the link with the detention conditions that led to the tragedy. On the contrary, Mexico maintains the common practice of detaining irregular migrants, **registering more than 700,000 detentions of adults between January and August 2024**.



IV. ENDING IMPUNITY

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

The [Committee against Torture in the framework of its review of Mexico in 2019](#) expressed concern about the serious deficiencies in the investigation of acts of torture and ill-treatment in Mexico, as well as the **persistence of high levels of impunity associated with this type of crime**. According to data from the [Observatory against Torture](#), **there were at least 4,592 investigations initiated for torture and ill-treatment at the national level in 2023; however, only 18 cases were brought before a judge**, i.e. only 0.1% of the cases of torture were investigated. During 2023, **only 8 convictions for torture and ill-treatment were handed down**.

Victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment rarely have access to free, adequate and accessible legal counsel without any form of discrimination. Police officers often discourage victims of torture from filing complaints. According to data from the [Observatory](#), the main authorities reported in investigations of torture and ill-treatment are State Prosecutors' Offices, followed by Public Security Forces. Even though the prosecutor's offices are the most reported (44%), **no cases were identified against personnel assigned to the prosecutor's offices**. In general, trials for torture are slower than those for other crimes, mainly due to a lack of resources and political will.

Despite being **one of the first countries to formally adopt the Istanbul Protocol, Mexico has failed to apply it effectively**. As documented by [the National Network of Independent Experts Against Torture](#), the Protocol, developed through collaboration between investigative institutions, experts and health professionals has, in practice, become another tool that perpetuates impunity rather than combating it. This network of experts has carefully documented how the Istanbul Protocol is often misused to serve the interests of perpetrators. Far from ensuring access to justice, it has, in many cases, become a tool to conceal instances of torture and ill-treatment. A key issue is the lack of independence among the medical and psychological experts who produce the reports, many of whom work for the Prosecutor's Offices, the very institutions frequently responsible for committing torture.



V. VICTIM'S RIGHTS

INDEX SCORE: CONSIDERABLE RISK

Mexico has had a General Victims Law since 2013 and the Executive Commission for Attention to Victims (CEAV) is the public body of the Federal Government in charge of guaranteeing the rights of victims of crimes and human rights violations under the Law. According to the National Registry of Victims, as well as state registries, the [Observatory against Torture](#) registered **1,553 victims of torture in 2023**. This is a very low figure compared to the total number of alleged victims identified in investigations by prosecutors' offices in the same year (4,592).

According to various [international human rights bodies](#), as well as civil society organisations that litigate cases and accompany torture victims, the implementation of the General Victims Law has been insufficient. Although the CEAV was created to provide comprehensive care, advice, protection, assistance and reparation to victims and their families, **most local commissions lack the necessary resources and qualified staff to provide the measures provided for in the Law**. Training is rarely provided to police, justice, healthcare, social services and other relevant personnel to raise awareness of victims' needs; this includes guidelines to ensure appropriate and prompt assistance.

Civil Society Organisations have documented that reparation measures focus almost exclusively on compensation; **there are no rehabilitation programmes for torture victims** and the administrative procedures to obtain recognition as a victim are complex and often revictimising. This explains why the number of torture victims registered by the CEAV falls far short of the real number. The State very rarely recognises collective reparation for violations suffered by the community, and prior consultation and approval by the victims are not sought. In addition, the budget of the Executive Commission for Attention to Victims has been reduced in recent years, **which has increasingly limited its capacity to intervene, and hundreds of torture victims are currently unattended**.



VI. PROTECTION FOR ALL

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

According to the [National Diagnosis on Sexual Torture Committed Against Women Prisoners in Mexico](#), sexual torture against women is a practice that currently persists in the country and is committed by various public security agents at both state and federal level. This diagnosis is the result of the 16-year struggle of the survivors of sexual torture in the [Atenco case](#) and is part of the compliance with the measures ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to guarantee non-impunity and non-repetition. The Diagnosis, which includes **1,280 interviews with women deprived of their liberty** in different detention centres around the country, revealed that **79.3% of the women interviewed stated that they had experienced torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment during their arrest, transfer to the Public Prosecutor's Office, stay in the Public Prosecutor's Office, transfer and stay in the penitentiary centre, including in health services. 32.19% explicitly stated that they had suffered torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**; 32.3% of the women interviewed explicitly stated that they had suffered torture; **19% explicitly reported having suffered sexual torture**, while 11.64% were presumed (from their narratives) to have experienced acts of sexual torture without having recognised it as such, i.e. 43.82% of the women who were subjected to acts of torture were subjected to acts of a sexual nature.

With regard to children and adolescents, [the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in the framework of its review of Mexico in August 2024](#), expressed concern over reports that police, prosecutors and military officials routinely **use violence and torture to extract confessions and commit other abuses against persons accused of crimes, including children**. The Committee also noted that the justice system does not systematically ensure due process. Additionally, it raised concern over the rise in cases of ill-treatment and cruel or degrading treatment of children in detention centres and other contexts of deprivation of liberty. For its part, the organisation Documenta A.C. detected that adolescents deprived of their liberty at the 45 internment centres for adolescents that exist in the country **are not in suitable spaces for their optimal development**. The [Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) conducted a national survey in 2022 and identified that **65.9% of young people complained of having suffered some kind of psychological violence and 45.9% complained of physical violence during their arrests**.



VII. RIGHT TO DEFEND AND CIVIC SPACE

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

Human rights defenders in Mexico suffer attacks, intimidation and reprisals for their work, especially if they have reported abuses committed by the armed forces or law enforcement agencies. The attacks perpetrated for their defence work are not investigated, and those responsible for such attacks are not brought to justice.

In 2024, the Mexico Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [documented that at least nine human rights defenders, six journalists and two media workers were killed in](#) connection with their work in Mexico. In addition, **five human rights defenders and one media worker disappeared** during this period.

In October 2024, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACtHR), as well as the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights, condemned [the murder of the priest Marcelo Pérez Pérez](#), a human rights defender and beneficiary of precautionary measures from the IACHR. Additionally, the Observatory warned about the reported disappearance of the [human rights defender Sandra Domínguez](#), on 4 October 2024 in the state of Oaxaca; [her body was found lifeless in April 2025](#). Similarly, [Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz](#), a territorial defender who led the resistance against the construction of a dam, was attacked and killed on 18 April 2025.

Human rights defenders in Mexico are also criminalised through the **intentional misuse of criminal law**, with the intention of undermining their defence work. [The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders has registered at least 10 cases of indigenous human rights defenders who have been convicted in judicial proceedings](#). In particular, the case of [Pablo López Alavez](#), a Zapotec Indigenous defender from Oaxaca, who has been detained **for more than 14 years without a sentence**. In 2017, the UN Working Group on [Arbitrary Detentions concluded that his deprivation of liberty was arbitrary](#). It also highlighted the case of [Kenia Hernández Montalván](#), an Amuzga Indigenous defender sentenced to more than 21 years, and the case of [Versaín Velasco García](#), a defender of Mayan Tzotzil territory in Chiapas sentenced to 58 years.

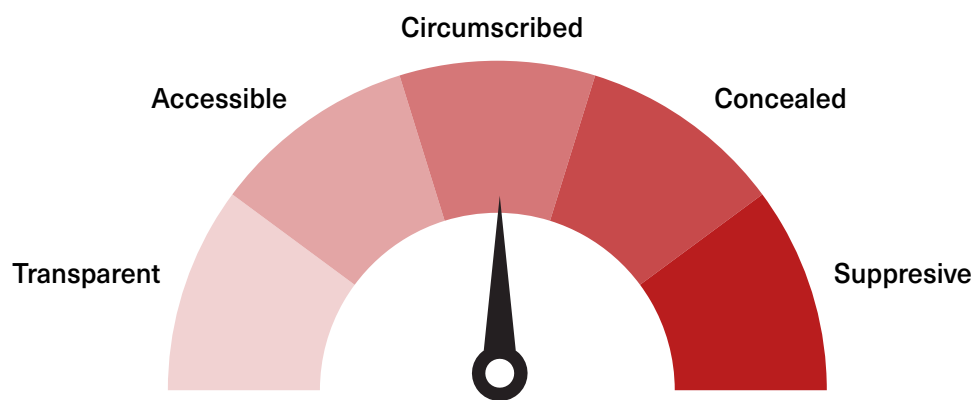
Between 2010 and April 2025, **27 human rights defenders working on the search for disappeared persons in Mexico were killed**, often in retaliation for their efforts to uncover the truth and seek justice for the missing.

It is important to note that many of the murdered or arbitrarily detained human rights defenders had been granted protection measures by the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists—an institution established in 2012 to ensure their safety, provide protection and establish an enabling environment for their work.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Global Torture Index rates the access to information and transparency available in each country when measuring and assessing the risks of torture and ill-treatment. It considers the availability of information, as well as the obstacles faced by civil society organisations in collecting data and their ability to access it. Data access must be guaranteed in every society, both in law and in practice, to ensure state transparency and accountability. It enables organisations, journalists and individuals to request information on public bodies, protocols and statistics on human rights violations. This indicator reflects the challenges in accessing information within a country, with each country and territory assigned a rating as Suppressive, Concealed, Circumscribed, Accessible or Transparent.

Mexico's score is **circumscribed** based on our evaluation of its current level of transparency and access to information.



ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN MEXICO: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Index includes 5 recommendations for Mexico, taken from the [Index webpage](#), which will serve as references in upcoming editions to monitor achievements within the anti-torture movement.

1. Fully comply with the General Law to Prevent, Investigate and Punish Torture (LGT), guaranteeing the existence of Prosecutor's Offices or Units specialised in the investigation of the crime of torture throughout the country, with the necessary human, financial and material resources to operate properly, as well as ensuring the operational autonomy and budgetary sufficiency of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture.
2. Ensure that judicial authorities apply the rule of exclusion of unlawful evidence obtained under torture, and that judicial independence is guaranteed in light of the recent reform in this area.
3. Repeal pre-trial detention and the concept of arraigo from the Constitution, as well as harmonise domestic rules on flagrancia (in flagrante delicto) with international human rights law.
4. Ensure that all physical and psychological evaluations carried out on victims of torture comply with the principles, procedures and guidelines contained in the Istanbul Protocol, ensuring the independence and impartiality of the experts and health professionals who perform them.
5. Ensure that all victims of torture obtain redress, including the right to fair and adequate compensation and the means for as full rehabilitation as possible.



FURTHER RESOURCES

For further information, the complete 2025 Torture Index—including detailed data visualisations, FAQs, the methodology, and more—can be accessed on our website: <https://www.omct.org/en/global-torture-index>. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at tortureindex@omct.org.

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