NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

# Mexican bishops call out drug cartels, politicians

David Agren Catholic News Service | Nov. 20, 2009

Soldiers escort a drug hitman as he is presented to the media in late October in Monterrey, Mexico. (CNS/Tomas Bravo, Reuters)

**CUAUTITLAN IZCALLI, Mexico** -- The Mexican bishops' conference rebuked narcotics-trafficking cartels for their murderous ways and demanded that Mexico's politicians crack down on the corruption and impunity that permits the illicit drug industry to flourish.
t
The bishops' Nov. 12 letter -- a long-anticipated response to the issue of violence in Mexico -- also called on all Mexicans, including senior Catholic leaders, to take responsibility for abating the drug- and crime-related violence that has claimed more than 13,000 lives over the past three years.

"Instead of searching for guilty parties and tossing mutual accusations, we call on each and every Mexican to assume responsibility, leaving behind complicities, passive attitudes and complacency," the letter read.
t
The bishops included themselves in the call for taking responsibility by acknowledging that they had fallen short in their efforts.
t
"We bishops recognize that we have been satisfied with superficial evangelizing and a cultural religiosity. We ask forgiveness for the incongruity ... and the false testimony of so many of the baptized," the letter read.
t
"From now on, we dedicate ourselves to the service of reconciliation, although we report some discomfort" with this, the letter added. "We offer our willingness to walk with all Catholics and all men and women of Mexico."
t
The 12-point letter -- read by Archbishop Domingo Diaz Martinez of Tulancingo and Bishops Carlos Garfias Merlos of Netzahualcoyotl and Miguel Alba Diaz of La Paz at the bishops' meeting north of Mexico City -- warned that a failure to abate the violence has resulted in anger manifested in "rage, hatred, rancor, a desire for revenge" and even cases of vigilantism.
t
The letter reproached "those involved in this dirty business" of drugs and called for the cartels and their associates to "stop harming yourselves and stop continuing to cause so much damage and pain to our young

people, our families and our homeland." The bishops also called on the country's politicians and public security officials to crack down on corruption and impunity and to focus on combating poverty and providing education and economic opportunities for those who often fall into the temptation of the seemingly easy money of the drug business.
t
"The drug business is an idol that seduces, promises well-being and life, but only engenders violence and death," the letter said.
t
Its release marked one of the bishops' most candid forays into an issue that has plagued Mexico for decades, but worsened in recent years as the federal government cracked down on the drug cartels and their turf wars. Crimes such as kidnapping and extortion have increased, too.
t
The letter also struck a more forceful tone than most statements from the bishops. The issue of violence has been a sensitive one for the Mexican church, which has been reticent to criticize the alleged excesses in the government crackdown and the dealings of drug cartels due to fears of reprisals.
t
The bishops' Nov. 9-13 meeting focused heavily on the issue of violence and the role the church should assume in terms of prevention and promoting reconciliation.
t
"We bishops are very interested in studying and deepening the role of the church in the subjects of insecurity and violence," Archbishop Carlos Aguilar Retes of Tlalnepantla, who was re-elected president of the bishops' conference, said Nov. 10.

The same day, Bishops Luis Flores Calzada of Valle de Chalco and Benjamin Castillo Plascencia of Tabasco outlined a church stance that the military should withdraw the more than 40,000 soldiers fighting the war on drug cartels from the streets. They said the military -- which public opinion surveys say ranks with the Catholic Church among Mexico's most respected institutions -- risked being corrupted and was not properly trained for policing duties. Allegations of human rights abuses against the military have increased since President Felipe Calderon deployed soldiers to fight the cartels in December 2006.

The two bishops also condemned a proposal by the mayor of a wealthy Monterrey-area municipality that vigilantes, dubbed locally as "cleanup commandos," be utilized against crime.
t
"Rather than cleanup commandos, what's required is that everyone -- society and government -- gets back to the areas of civics and values, because violence only begets violence," said Bishop Flores.
t
He and Bishop Castillo told reporters that some of what the bishops were proposing was based on consultations earlier this year with their counterparts in Colombia and with Italian Father Luigi Ciotti, who gained fame for confronting the Mafia. Proposals from those consultations included providing better civic education and fomenting a culture of denouncing crime and corruption.

Donate today Webathon 2016 one family [1]

DONATE NOW [1]

Enjoy this article?
Help support more like it by **donating today!** [1]

---

**Source URL (retrieved on *05/06/2016 - 06:37*):** http://ncronline.org/news/global/mexican-bishops-call-out-drug-cartels-politicians

**Links:**
[1] http://ncrnews.org/webathon/donate/article-end