

Government and Society: A united front against crime

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Text taken from the address delivered by President Felipe Calderon, the president of Mexico, at the inauguration of the new board of directors of Mexico's National Chamber of Freight Transportation (Cámara Nacional del Autotransporte de Carga; CANACAR), Mexico's leading association in the transportation industry.

Mexico City, April 15, 2011 - My friends and colleagues, the safety of our citizens is, I know very well, one of the issues that Mexicans worry about most nowadays. Tragedies such as those that took place recently in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, where migrants were kidnapped and brutally murdered,¹ have, of course, filled the Mexico with great grief.

I reiterate my most severe condemnation of these despicable acts of cowardice and, of course, my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, to whom I offer all the support the Federal Government can provide.

These murders are acts of extreme barbarism that demonstrate the baseness, the cruelty that these criminals have reached in order to make a profit at the cost of honest people.

As has already been announced, the Mexican Army and the Federal Police Force have already detained 17 men suspected of being involved in these heinous crimes, and have also detained 16 municipal police officers who were possible accomplices to these criminals. We have also recently rescued five more people who were kidnapped.

And I want to assure you, my friends and colleagues, that we will not stop until we have captured and brought to justice all members of this criminal cell and their accomplices.

I have also issued orders to increase the presence of the Federal Police Force in the state of Tamaulipas and in the northeast part of Mexico, including the border states of Nuevo Leon, part of Coahuila, and part of San Luis Potosi.

And we will strengthen our operations in order to guarantee the security of families and the security of those that travel by road, including, of course, those involved in the transportation industry.

The homicide of migrants in Tamaulipas or the death of innocent young men in the state of Morelosⁱⁱ, or the loss of lives in any part of the country- any life lost- undoubtedly hurts and saddens us, but at the same time it offends us greatly because it reveals to us the type of criminals we are facing.

And we're not just talking about bands of drug traffickers. We are talking about criminal organizations that make a living of robbing people on the road, that make a living from human trafficking, that make a living from kidnapping, from extortion. We are facing murderers that make a living from violence.

And those criminal acts remind us that the violence that enrages us so much, and saddens Mexicans so much, is caused by them. The true source of violence is criminal acts and the degree of barbarism that crime has reached.

And it reminds us that that violence is what massacred those young men in Morelos. It is what kidnapped and massacred the migrants in Tamaulipas. And it is wrong to think that that violence will disappear, as some suggest, if the Government simply stands by and stops acting against criminals. How naïve!

On the contrary, if the Federal Government, which is confronting criminals directly, were to back down now, it would mean giving these criminals and murderers permission and freedom to kill.

What happened in Tamaulipas and what happened in Morelos has stained our society with blood in a way we cannot tolerate. But we know all too well, my friends and colleagues, that this is not the only problem that worries the Mexican people today.

The lady whose bag or purse is stolen; the passenger in a public bus who is robbed, the passenger in a chartered bus who is robbed, the business owner who has to pay so he won't be kidnapped or robbed, the motorist whose vehicle is violently taken, or the one who leaves his office only to find that his car has been stolen.

All these crimes, my friends, all these are common crimes that should be dealt with by local authorities and that, nevertheless, in many places around the country, happen daily without police intervention and in some cases with the protection of the police.

That is why the Federal Government is acting in defense of the people: to defend it from crime and from criminals. And we do this with all we have, and with the best we have: with our Federal Police, with our Army, with our Navy.

And it is precisely because of the loyalty, the professionalism, the training, the discipline, the strength of our soldiers, our marines, and our Federal Police that we are able to confront these bands of criminals and capture their main leaders and hit men.

However, it is imperative that all government entities, ALL government entities, especially at the state and city level, take action and immediately begin to purge, train and strengthen their police corps.

It's inconceivable that in many places around Mexico the police force is not only not fulfilling its responsibilities but is even working for criminals.

For instance, it's offensive and unacceptable that in San Fernando police officers themselves are being identified by some witnesses as accomplices who provided protection and information to the Zetas, the criminal band that perpetrated this act of barbarism. And instead of protecting the citizens, or at least informing state and Federal authorities about these acts, they're actually covering up these murderous crimes.

That's unacceptable, ladies and gentlemen. Violence will only truly be brought under control when in each city and in each state there are government leaders, local police departments, attorney generals, and judges that truly want to confront crime and truly want to end it instead of just standing idly by; and at the same time, when together we can offer social opportunities for education, recreation, and employment to our children and young people.

In order to win this fight, a fight that is nothing less than a fight for the safety that our citizens need, we also need the support of our society; a society that holds all its leaders and all its representatives accountable; that firmly expects all of us, without exception, to comply with the will of the people; an active and participating society, that instills values: the value of honesty, the value of respect to life, the value of respecting others, the value of respecting the law; a society that renounces, without hesitation or excuses, all criminal violence.

We have heard, we are listening now, and we will continue to be sensitive to the pained and angered voice of the people. And the people justly demand a Mexico without violence, a Mexico of peace. This is also what we want; this is also what we aspire to. We are fighting for that Mexico of justice and for that Mexico of peace.

The Federal Government shares this desire, and that is the reason why we confront decisively those who cause violence; specifically: criminals.

This is why we have kept the door open and we will continue to keep it open, with true sincerity, to a discussion of the strategies we employ, so that our strategy may be adjusted where it must be adjusted and so that it is more fully developed and strengthened where it needs to be.

But we must not lose sight, my friends and colleagues, of the fact that our objective is to reach a Mexico of peace and tranquility. And those who disturb that peace and tranquility are those who act violently to satisfy their own interests. We cannot lose sight of the fact that what threatens our peace is the violence perpetrated by criminals, not the action of the Government that fights against those criminals.

And this goal of peace cannot be reached through easy shortcuts or simply by having good intentions. The solution is not negotiating nor giving in to criminals. We used to close our eyes to the reality of crime and pretend it did not exist, but that was not the solution. The solution is also not letting things be or letting things happen; or pretending that if we do not act against crime, as some suggest, violence will disappear.

We cannot pretend that if we do not act against criminals they will simply start behaving themselves someday and start respecting citizens. This doesn't happen. It's not what's happening in Mexico now. They murder people anywhere without reason and without conscience. And this

violence can and must be stopped through the action of the State, because that is the purpose of the State.

The violence that Mexico suffers from today is generated by crime and it spreads because of the weakness of our institutions and the lack of resolve of our leaders. Nothing favors crime more than the attack against our institutions themselves.

This is why our efforts and the desire of all of us to take back our peace must be focused on countering the criminals who have taken our peace; it should be focused against criminals more than against those who fight bravely against criminals. Surely, it must be demanded of the Government to fulfill its responsibility, and in the Federal Government we accept this charge.

But we must not forget that we must be united against those who are the true enemies of Mexico. And the true enemy of Mexico is crime.

This is not all. It is necessary, as well, that together we rebuild our society and that we regain our values. Most importantly, we must watch over our young people. We have to change the culture of violence, which is growing, for a culture of respect to others, for a culture of peace; we have to instill the values that have been lost- the values of justice, of legality and honest work- and, at the same time, we must open opportunities for employment to our young people, opportunities of education and recreation.

This must be an effort of the Government, but also an effort shared with society. This is why I agree that we must say, “It’s enough!”ⁱⁱⁱ “Enough!” to criminals. “Enough!” to the enemies of Mexico.

We must also say, “It’s enough!” to those that choose not to choose, those that choose apathy or idleness. We must say, “It’s enough!” to the authorities and politicians that use doublespeak to hide themselves and don’t fulfill their responsibilities. We must say, “It’s enough” to those whose intentions are to take advantage of the pain of victims to promote their own self-interests of any kind, and those who want to see Mexico divided and, for that cause, never stop sowing the seeds of anger and rancor, planting animosity, fear, doubt, and hate among Mexicans.

We have to be better than they are. We have to unite forces better than they do, and we must go forward with the conviction that our fight is the fight of all Mexicans and that the interest of Mexico will prevail above the partial and perverse self-interests of criminals.

Friends and colleagues of CANACAR.

I know how important these topics are for you because you are Mexican men and women who know about hard work; Mexican men and women who put themselves at risk, even more than others, to provide for your families.

I wish to tell you, my friends and colleagues, that despite all our adversities, despite the challenges, that there are strong grounds on which to base our confidence in the future of Mexico.

For instance, today we have a strong and stable economy, stronger and more stable than ever. And we are currently working with determination in order to face serious problems like security and justice, that’s true, but we will solve these problems with the united will of the Mexican people.

We all have a role to play in this collective effort for Mexico.

I invite the businessmen and women involved in the transportation industry to keep working for our great country, because your enthusiasm and your commitment play a key role in the development of our economy to generate more jobs and to make Mexico a true world-class logistic platform, one that provides jobs for Mexicans.

I know I can count on the honest work, the will and determination of Mexico's transportation workers.

And know this, my friends and colleagues of CANACAR, that you can count on your friend, the President of the Mexican Republic, in whom you also have an ally in fostering growth in the transportation industry in our country.

My best wishes to the new Board of Directors.

Congratulations.

ⁱ This is a reference to 145 bodies that were found in mass graves in the town of San Fernando, Tamaulipas.

ⁱⁱ This is a reference to the murder of seven young men in the Mexican state of Morelos on March 28, 2011, two weeks prior to the address. Three of the young men spoke to family members about receiving threats from men who claimed to be local police officers.

ⁱⁱⁱ "¡Ya basta!" This is a reference to the protests that had taken place as a result of the massacres and murders a few weeks prior to the address.