



Rise in Mexico Lynchings Reflects Regional Trend (/news-briefs/rise-in-mexico-lynchings-reflects-regional-trend)

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Lynchings of suspected criminals reportedly reached historic highs in Mexico

Scene of a mob gathering

(<http://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news>) during 2015, reflecting a broader regional phenomenon as frustration over government corruption and judicial incompetence prompts citizens across Latin America to take justice into their own hands.

The New York Times

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/24/world/americas/as-frustrations-with-mexicos-government-rise-so-do-lynchings.html>), citing data collected by Raúl Rodríguez Guillén -- author of a book on lynchings in Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news>) and member of the Sociology Department at Mexico Metropolitan Autonomous University (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – UAM) -- reported at least 78 lynchings occurred in Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news>) last year, more than double the number in 2014.

According to some experts, this makes 2015 the year with the most public lynchings since 1990, reported the Times.

The New York Times recounts one incident in which two employees of a polling organization in the town of Ajalpan, Puebla were mistaken for kidnappers. At first they were saved from an angry mob by police but were later beaten, doused in gasoline, and set on fire.

Local residents said the brutality was the result of frustration with government corruption and indifference.

"There is a crisis in terms of the growth of violence and crime and a parallel erosion of authority and the rule of law," Guillén explained. "These lynchings acquire a double meaning. People lynch both the suspect and the symbol of authority."

InSight Crime Analysis

Mexico is not the only country where mob lynchings are on the rise. As InSight Crime has previously reported ([/news-analysis/vigilante-justice-popular-across-latin-america](#)), vigilante justice has become a region-wide phenomenon, arising in communities ([/news-analysis/michoacan-vigilante-standoff-highlights-security-dilemma-in-mexico](#)) where rule of law and faith in state institutions is weak, and impunity levels are high ([/news-briefs/report-highlights-how-impunity-fuels-lynchings-in-centam](#)).

SEE ALSO: Mexico's Security Dilemma: Michoacan's Militias ([/investigations/mexico-michoacan-vigilantes](#))

But it appears that lynchings are gaining traction in more than just isolated pockets of lawless territory. Throughout Latin America there is a high degree of support among citizens for such extralegal justice. A December 2014 study by Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ab2014/AB2014_Comparative_Report_English_V3_revised_011315_V) found 43 percent of respondents in the Dominican Republic approved vigilante justice, the highest in Latin America. In Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news>), 33 percent of citizens expressed support.

Beyond Mexico (<http://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news>), several South American countries also witnessed notable developments related to vigilante justice in 2015. A movement called "Chapa tu choro ([/news-briefs/violent-vigilante-movement-taking-off-in-peru](#))," or "Catch your thief," became popular among residents in Peru (<http://www.insightcrime.org/peru-organized-crime-news>),

amid growing sentiment (/news-briefs/70-say-peru-in-danger-of-becoming-narco-state) that the Andean nation is in danger of becoming a "narco-state." Argentina also saw an increase (/news-briefs/wave-of-lynchings-suggests-rising-distrust-in-argentine-police) in mob lynchings, perhaps a manifestation of increasing popular concerns over insecurity (/news-briefs/argentina-sees-rising-homicides-as-role-in-drug-trade-grows) and an ineffective justice system (/news-briefs/raids-argentina-police-stations-corruption-insecurity-continue-rosario).