

Mexico's Drugs Murders Soaring

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For those keeping count, 2,682 Mexicans have died so this year so far in drug-related killings, exceeding last year's total of 2,673. And for those planning their next vacation, the state of Chihuahua, as reported by the Mexican newspaper El Universal, accounted for more than one-third of the murders, with 780 of those slaughtered in the state's border city of Ciudad Juarez. Another 516 met their end in Sinaloa, 159 in Baja California, 134 in Guerrero, and 117 in Michoacan: this despite the deployment of 36,000 troops by President Felipe Calderon to take on the cartels.

Since raw numbers can be numbing, let's take a closer look at an incident this very day in the very bloody city of Ciudad Juarez, as reported by New Zealand's One News:

Hooded gunmen dressed in black burst into a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in northern Mexico, dragged patients out of a prayer session and shot them dead in an attack that killed eight people.

The hitmen, wearing body armor, forced their way into the center in the violent border city of Ciudad Juarez on Wednesday night, ordering the patients onto the floor and then picking out several men and killing them in the back patio.

"They came in and shouted at us to get down on the floor and not to look at them," a witness told local TV news as he fled the evangelist-funded rehab center with a three-year-old boy in his arms.

But the first shootings caused panic and the patients tried to flee, prompting the gunmen to open fire on the stampede, witnesses said.

"They killed the person running behind us," the witness said.

Eight people died and six others were seriously wounded, the Chihuahua state attorney general's office said on Thursday.

The shootings were believed to be part of a drug gang feud. Police said the rehab center may have been suspected of protecting dealers from rival drug gangs.

Those dead bodies only accounted for 8 of the two-week total of 40 corpses for Ciudad Juarez in the past two days, even with 2,500 soldiers patrolling the city streets.