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## Narco Trafficking, Corruption, and Perpetuated Violence in Guatemala

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# Narco-trafficking, Corruption, and Perpetuated Violence in Guatemala



## Abstract

Over the years drug cartels have made their way into Guatemala through their borders. Drug trafficking is the main reason why the border between Guatemala and Honduras is one of the most violent locations in Central America. Due to lawlessness and corruption, wealthy drug traffickers assume an authoritative role in the region (Crisis Group, 2014). A 2010 report done by U.S. International Narcotics Control Strategy says that “Guatemala is the epicenter of the drug threat.” (Brice, CNN, 2011). However, the increase in drug related violence is due to Zetas, a Mexican drug cartel. The criminal gangs from Zetas have so much power that their permission is required to enter and leave certain neighborhoods and streets in Guatemala. Narco-trafficking related crimes also includes kidnapping. The amount of missing persons has increased to 207 percent from 2009 to 2013 (OASC, 2014). Kidnapping occurs so that drug traffickers can demand ransom and they have a reputation of killing the victim even after a ransom has been paid

A recommendation to solve the drug trafficking problem in Guatemala would be to fix the corruption which permeates throughout the Guatemalan government, including the police forces. After dealing with governmental and political corruption, there will be a better chance to properly train and equip the police forces in order to prevent gangsters and traffickers from having power in the streets. Drug trafficking is the gateway to many other crimes in Guatemala and is the core reason why there is so much violence and unease in the State. Fixing up the government is necessary for the livelihood of the Guatemalan people.



Figure 2. Zetas influence in Central America

## Ima Haque

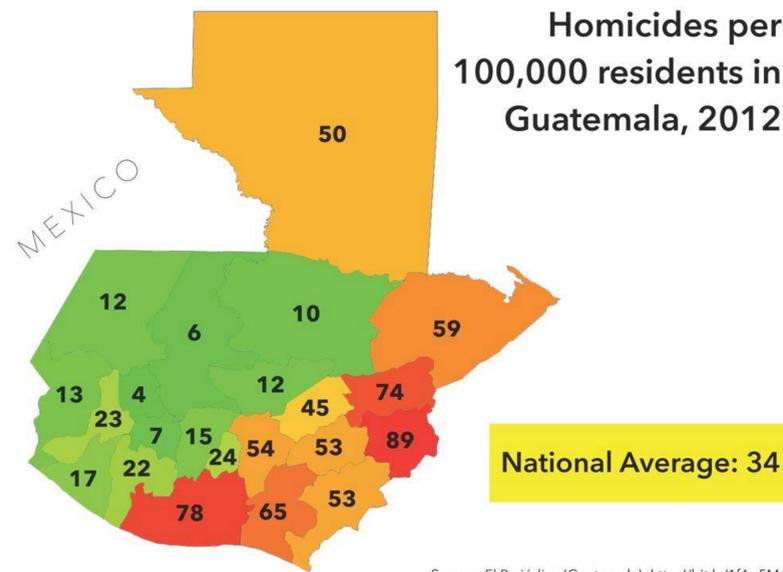


Figure 1. From El Periodico (Guatemala) shows the homicide rate from 2012.

## Background

Guatemala has a population of 14 million people. It is a small nation, about the size of Tennessee. However, reports show that 12,500 people were slain within the years of 2009 and 2010 and 41% of the deaths were due to drug trafficking (Brice, 2011). Figure 1 provides geographic distribution of how many homicides occurred in specific regions per 100,000 people from the year 2012. Drug trafficking is prevalent in the region predominantly due to governmental corruption. The US State Department says that 96% of crimes in Guatemala go unpunished. Fernando Carrera Castro, director of the Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies in Guatemala City says that prisons are centers for corruption and criminals continue their activities within them (Brice, 2011). “Former Special Prosecutor for Counter-Narcotics Leonel Ruiz told the BBC in June 2009 that the Zetas operated in 75% of the country. And the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute said last year that the influence of organized crime groups rivaled or exceeded that of the Guatemalan government in 40% of the country.” (Brice, 2011). As shown in Figure 2, the arrows point to the area in which Zetas have control over Guatemala.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, violence fueled by narco trafficking is a widespread issue for Guatemala due to governmental corruption. Since there are no regulatory guidelines in effect, criminals do not have deterrence or fear of potential litigation and legal consequences. Criminals, such as gangsters and drug lords are able to bribe government officials and law enforcement thus gaining more power than them. It would benefit Guatemalan society if there were global initiatives which promote justice in the region. The prevalence of corruption only supports drug trafficking, violence, and kidnapping.

## Acknowledgments

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