



EXTORTION FOR PROTECTION MONEY
EXTORSÃO PARA PAGAMENTO DE QUARTO
LA EXTORSIÓN POR COBRO DE PISO



<https://doi.org/10.56238/edimacto2025.040-010>

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ABSTRACT

Extortion is a high-impact crime that is growing in Mexico and has become normalized in every state, every municipality, every individual, and every community. It has proven to adapt to new technologies, but it is also practiced with a high degree of impunity. One form of extortion is the "cobro de piso" (base payment), which consists of the payment of a certain amount of money demanded from individuals or businesses, generally by criminal organizations in exchange for protection or to avoid violent retaliation. The "cobro de piso" (base payment) is one of the most violent forms of extortion in Mexico, carried out by criminal groups. They demand regular payments (weekly, biweekly, or monthly) from merchants, business owners, transporters, or producers in exchange for "protection." They are threatened that failure to pay the agreed-upon amounts could result in assault (a beating or a kidnapping), robbery, arson, disappearance, or death. "For criminals, there is no activity, line of business, or formal or informal business that they do not extort. They also now control entire markets in the country for products such as chicken, tortillas, eggs, construction materials, and many other activities that can no longer operate peacefully and legally without paying fees and taxes to criminals. Those who refuse to pay outright are murdered, see their

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businesses go up in flames, or, the bravest, prefer to close their family businesses, companies, or grape harvesting operations so they don't have to pay taxes to organized crime, in addition to those they already pay to the government.” (García Soto, 2024) In Mexico, organized crime has determined that anyone who produces anything, sells anything, or trades any type of goods and services must pay a fee in order to work, regardless of whether they are a street vendor, a small family business, a medium-sized company, or even a large supermarket chain. It is suspected that the majority of intentional homicides recorded in the country are linked to the collection of extortion fees in bars, grocery stores, street vendors, livestock farmers, farmers, transporters, butchers, gas stations, and bakeries. “One of the main drivers of the growth of extortion is the low likelihood of punishment. According to various studies, most cases go unreported due to fear of reprisals or distrust of the authorities. Even when complaints are filed, the processes are long, opaque, and often end without consequences for those responsible. This lack of effective response fuels a cycle of silence and vulnerability. In several regions of the country, extortion is part of the “business model” of criminal groups that have diversified their sources of income. Its impact goes far beyond the demanded payment: it affects family finances, deteriorates emotional health, and weakens the social fabric.” (Martínez, 2025) The unreported and uninvestigated crime rate against businesses reached 96.7% in 2023, according to the National Survey on Victimization and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE, 2024). This means that for every 100 crimes committed against businesses, only 3.3 were reported and/or investigated by authorities. This indicates a high level of impunity and underreporting of crimes against companies.

Keywords: Extortion. Floor Charge. Business. Organized Crime. Dark Cipher.

RESUMO

A extorsão é um crime de alto impacto que está crescendo no México e se tornou comum em todos os estados, municípios, indivíduos e comunidades. Ela se adapta às novas tecnologias, mas também é praticada com alto grau de impunidade. Uma forma de extorsão é o "cobro de piso" (pagamento base), que consiste no pagamento de uma determinada quantia em dinheiro exigida de indivíduos ou empresas, geralmente por organizações criminosas, em troca de proteção ou para evitar retaliações violentas. O "cobro de piso" (pagamento base) é uma das formas mais violentas de extorsão no México, praticada por grupos criminosos. Eles exigem pagamentos regulares (semanais, quinzenais ou mensais) de comerciantes, empresários, transportadores ou produtores em troca de "proteção". Eles são ameaçados de que o não pagamento dos valores acordados pode resultar em agressão (spancamento ou sequestro), roubo, incêndio criminoso, desaparecimento ou morte. “Para os criminosos, não há atividade, ramo de atividade ou negócio formal ou informal que eles não extorquem. Eles também controlam mercados inteiros no país para produtos como frango, tortilhas, ovos, materiais de construção e muitas outras atividades que não podem mais operar pacificamente e legalmente sem pagar taxas e impostos aos criminosos. Aqueles que se recusam a pagar diretamente são assassinados, veem seus negócios irem pelos ares ou, os mais corajosos, preferem fechar seus negócios familiares, empresas ou operações de colheita de uva para não terem que pagar impostos ao crime organizado, além daqueles que já pagam ao governo.” (García Soto, 2024) No México, o crime organizado determinou que qualquer pessoa que produza, venda ou comercialize qualquer tipo de bens e serviços deve pagar uma taxa para trabalhar, independentemente de ser um vendedor ambulante, uma pequena empresa familiar, uma empresa de médio porte ou até mesmo uma grande rede de supermercados. Suspeita-se que a maioria dos homicídios dolosos registrados no país esteja ligada à cobrança de taxas de extorsão em bares, supermercados, vendedores ambulantes, pecuaristas, agricultores, transportadores, açougues, postos de gasolina e padarias. “Um dos principais impulsionadores do crescimento da extorsão é a baixa probabilidade de punição. Segundo diversos estudos, a maioria dos casos não é denunciada por medo de represálias ou desconfiança em relação às autoridades. Mesmo



quando as denúncias são feitas, os processos são longos, opacos e, muitas vezes, terminam sem consequências para os responsáveis. Essa falta de resposta efetiva alimenta um ciclo de silêncio e vulnerabilidade. Em diversas regiões do país, a extorsão faz parte do “modelo de negócios” de grupos criminosos que diversificaram suas fontes de renda. Seu impacto vai muito além do pagamento exigido: afeta as finanças familiares, deteriora a saúde emocional e fragiliza o tecido social.” (Martínez, 2025) A taxa de crimes não denunciados e não investigados contra empresas atingiu 96,7% em 2023, segundo a Pesquisa Nacional de Vitimização e Percepção da Segurança Pública (ENVIPE, 2024). Isso significa que, para cada 100 crimes cometidos contra empresas, apenas 3,3 foram denunciados e/ou investigados pelas autoridades. Isso indica um alto nível de impunidade e subnotificação de crimes contra empresas.

Palavras-chave: Extorsão. Proteção Contra Criminosos. Negócios. Crime Organizado. Crime Não Declarado.

RESUMEN

La extorsión es un delito de alto impacto en crecimiento en México y que se ha normalizado en todos los estados, todos los municipios, todas las personas y todas las comunidades, que ha demostrado adaptarse a las nuevas tecnologías, pero además se ejerce con un alto grado de impunidad. Una modalidad de extorsión es el cobro de piso, que consiste en el pago de cierta cantidad de dinero que se exige a individuos o negocios generalmente por parte de organizaciones criminales a cambio de protección o para evitar represalias violentas. El cobro de piso es una de las modalidades más violentas de extorsión en México por parte de grupos criminales, los cuales exigen pagos regulares (semanales, quincenales o mensuales) a comerciantes, empresarios, transportistas o productores a cambio de “protección”, ante la amenaza de que si no cubren la cuota y montos acordados pueden sufrir desde agresiones (una golpiza o un levantón), robos, incendios, una desaparición o la muerte. “Para los criminales ya no hay actividad, giro o negocio formal o informal al que no extorsionen, además de controlar también ya mercados enteros en el país de productos como el pollo, las tortillas, el huevo, los materiales de construcción y muchas otras actividades que ya no pueden operar tranquila y legalmente si no le pagan cuotas e impuestos a los criminales. Y los que se niegan a pagar de plano son asesinados, ven arder sus negocios en llamas o, los más valientes, prefieren cerrar sus negocios familiares, empresas o vendimias, para no tener que pagarle impuestos al crimen organizado, además de los que ya le pagan al gobierno”. (García Soto, 2024) En México el crimen organizado ha determinado que a cualquier persona que produzca algo, venda cualquier cosa o comercie cualquier tipo de bienes y servicios tiene que pagar una cuota para poder trabajar, no importa si es un vendedor ambulante de la calle, un pequeño negocio familiar, una empresa mediana o incluso una gran cadena de supermercados. Se sospecha que la mayor parte de los homicidios dolosos registrados en el país están vinculados con el cobro de derecho de piso en bares, tiendas de abarrotes, comercios ambulantes, ganaderos, agricultores, transportistas, carniceros, gasolineras y panaderías. “Uno de los principales motores del crecimiento de la extorsión es la baja probabilidad de castigo. Según diversos estudios, la mayoría de los casos no se denuncian por temor a represalias o desconfianza en las autoridades. Incluso cuando se presentan denuncias, los procesos son largos, opacos y, con frecuencia, terminan sin consecuencias para los responsables. Esta falta de respuesta efectiva alimenta un ciclo de silencio y vulnerabilidad. En varias regiones del país, la extorsión forma parte del “modelo de negocios” de grupos criminales que han diversificado sus fuentes de ingreso. Su impacto va mucho más allá del pago exigido: afecta la economía familiar, deteriora la salud emocional y debilita el tejido social”. (Martínez, 2025) La cifra negra de delitos contra negocios no denunciados y no investigados durante el año 2023 llegó al 96.7%, según la Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública (ENVIPE, 2024). Esto significa que por cada 100 delitos cometidos contra negocios, solo 3.3 fueron denunciados y/o investigados



por las autoridades. Esto indica un alto nivel de impunidad y subregistro de la delincuencia contra empresas.

Palabras clave: Extorsión. Cobro de Piso. Negocio. Crimen Organizado. Cifra Negra.



1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most common extortion crimes in Mexico is the collection of piso, which is an "illegal tax" that is charged by organized crime to tenants, affecting thousands of businesses and companies in the country.

"The National Institute of Criminal Sciences (INACIPE) defines extortion as a high-impact crime that consists of a person, association or for-profit organization, which through deception, threat and/or violence, forces any other person to give, do or stop doing something in order to damage their assets and emotional sphere.

There are two general types of extortion. The direct one, where the person or persons who extort interact in a personal way, going to the home, school, work or business of the victim or the victims and the indirect (virtual) that is committed through means of communication such as cell phones or social networks. In the latter, there is no direct (personal) contact between victim and aggressor." (Tello, 2024)

Article 390 of the Federal Penal Code (2024) defines extortion considered a high-impact crime as follows:

"Anyone who without the right forces another to give, do, stop doing or tolerate something, in order to obtain a profit for himself or for another or causing someone property damage, shall be punished with a penalty of two to eight years' imprisonment and a fine of forty to one hundred and sixty days."

It also states that the penalties will increase up to a little more if it is carried out by a criminal association, a public servant, former public servant, member or former member of a police corporation or the Armed Forces.

"In addition, the public servant or former public servant and the member or former member of a police corporation shall be dismissed from public employment, position or commission and, in the case of a member of the Armed Forces in a retired, reserve or active situation, the definitive dismissal from the institution to which he or she belongs, as well as the disqualification from holding public office or commission for one to five years." (Federal Police, 2018)

This means that forcing a person to cover a fee with threats is extortion, and this is what is known as floor collection.

Over the years, this type of extortion has increased considerably through which a fee is demanded from business owners of all types illegally, under threat and extortion. The modus operandi of criminal groups consists of armed men leaving a message in the businesses to establish contact with the owners and let them know the fee they will have to pay for the right of floor.



"The right of floor occurs when criminals or criminal groups show up to businesses to demand that the owners of the place pay a certain amount of money from time to time in exchange for protection both for the owner who is being extorted and for the establishment.

The collection of the floor is then an offer of protection against a threat of harm to the owner or the business. In this modality, the extorter can exercise violence if the collection fee is not paid, through homicide, kidnapping or burning of the business.

The collection of the floor is then characterized by establishing an unequal exchange relationship between a victim and a perpetrator, since the extortionist receives a fee in exchange for protecting the victim and this protection is imposed.

When extortion occurs only once: a person deceives or threatens another person so that the latter, the victim, pays an amount and the affected person receives nothing in return. Even an extortionist may have little ability to comply with a threat, but uses the violent context to his advantage, this is the case of telephone extortion, e.g.

Meanwhile, in cases of flat collection, the victim and the perpetrator have a continuous tax relationship: the offender collects a fee every week or month and visits his "client" to collect; sometimes the rules change and the quota goes up or its periodicity is shortened, among other things." (Martínez Trujillo, 2021)

Since there have been statistical records of the incidence of the crime of extortion in Mexico, a clear upward trend can be observed despite its annual fluctuations.

"In the case of a small store, the charge can be between 500 and 1,000 pesos a week, but in larger establishments, where criminals realize that there are more resources, they can demand between eight and 12,000 pesos a month." (Ramos, 2025)

A merchant or businessman can refuse to pay and run the risk of the threat becoming a reality, but in a context of high violence and uncertainty it is a scenario that few would choose.

Another alternative would be to go out of business, relocate, or become employed. This choice can be made by businesses of a certain size and line of business, especially those that are in a position to move their company from one place to another, despite the fact that this change is imposed.

Of course, the aggressor could follow his victim anywhere to carry out his threat. Although it would be very costly, in particular because it would have to exercise violence in a territory where it does not necessarily have the conditions to do so, such as support from local criminal networks or public authorities.

Organized crime groups have now arrived at the supermarket stores of the four largest chains established in several states of the Mexican Republic, to request the payment of up



to 1 million pesos per month for the collection of dues, with the threat that if they do not do so, The manager and the store will pay the consequences.

Chain stores have begun to be extorted and threatened by criminal cells, some belonging to drug cartels and others that are created by armed common criminals posing as members of a criminal organization, who show up to demand the monthly payment of certain amounts of money in exchange for not kidnapping or murdering supermarket managers.

"It is known of at least two of the strongest chains, one national and one foreign, which already report in their internal reports the presence of the collection of dues in several cities of the Republic." (García Soto, 2024)

The collection of the floor illegally constitutes a fixed tax, since the extortionist, supposedly from organized crime, charges a variable economic rate or quota, generating a tax system parallel to that of the government, which has already been accepted even by large companies, with the aim that their products reach their destination without suffering possible thefts. that their establishments or vehicles are not set on fire or that the life of any of their employees is attempted.

Now "criminal organizations collect their own taxes and, with the terror of weapons and violence, their effectiveness in collecting and collecting is even better and more effective than that of the SAT,¹⁰ which also has its methods of coercion, but they do not compare to the cruelty and fear that armed criminals instill. And from that, Mexicans are paying double taxation: on the one hand, the federal government and the state and municipal governments bleed us with taxes that are not necessarily reflected or remunerated in the terrible services we receive, starting with the lack of security, continuing with the inefficient health system and finishing off with the terrible urban services that the different levels of government grant us." (García Soto, 2024)

"Extortion is directed with total impunity; it is an illegal and immoral tax that charges for the right to work and funds the criminal gangs that plague 75 percent of the national territory." (Di Costanzo, 2024)

In most businesses, all merchandise has a price with a fee included, imposed each month by a member of the criminal group that dominates the area in exchange for protection.

"According to the Laboratory of Analysis, Trade and Business of the UNAM, the fees charged by Organized Crime to tenants, producers, farmers, and the entire chain of suppliers and marketers of products already have an important impact on inflation, we have the case of lemons or avocados in Michoacán, so the right of floor can affect inflation by up to 2 or 3 percentage points." (Di Costanzo, 2024)

¹⁰ Tax Administration System



"The alarming increase in extortion has gone hand in hand with an astonishing territorial expansion of organized crime; an expansion that has not only had a devastating effect on a large number of local economies, but has also begun to undermine the health of Mexico's main institutional creature in the last half century: the democratic regime." (Guerrero Gutiérrez, 2024)

According to intelligence and security experts, reporting is not easy. This is partly due to the collusion of certain elements within the institutions of justice with criminal groups, as it generates fear in the victims to report the possibility of reprisals.

Reporting can be counterproductive, useless or dangerous. Rent collection is a crime that involves a long-term relationship and a complaint can cause the extortionist to increase the level of violence to impose his protection. That is, the criminal, the only real provider of protection, can retaliate against his protégé, since he dared to denounce.

At the national level, the black figure in the case of extortion is 96.7%, according to the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE). (INEGI, 2024)

This means that 9.67 out of 10 criminal events passed without legal repercussions for the alleged offender. This implies that only 3.3% of crimes committed in Mexico are officially registered.

The black figure can be close to 99%, a microuniverse of crimes is reported in relation to what really exists. People on the one hand do not report because they know that there is no capacity for investigation and fear inhibits them from reporting; at the same time, more and more people are engaged in this because the risk is very low.

It is added that in the crime of extortion there is a 98.36% impunity rate. (Findings, 2024)

2 OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

The main objective of this investigation is to publicize how organized crime has diversified its illicit activities, among which the extortion of companies through the collection of floor fees stands out, what its modus operandi is and what proposals have been made in Mexico to combat them.

This work is justified because in our country it is a latent issue that deserves an exhaustive and in-depth investigation, since the consequences are very serious, especially the resurgence in violence, the increase in insecurity and the loss of confidence of investors to establish their companies that generate jobs.



3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main sources of this research are documents such as codes in force in Mexico, reports, reports, bulletins, interviews, executive summaries, books and magazines that talk about the different modalities of extortion, national and local newspapers that on numerous occasions and very frequently present articles that denounce this type of crime, as well as official websites such as INEGI,¹¹ ENVIPE,¹² ANPEC,¹³ SESNSP¹⁴, in addition to studies that experts have carried out on the subject.

Therefore, it is considered that this work is of a documentary and descriptive nature.

4 RESULTS

The 2024 National Business Victimization Survey, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, in a sample of 36,892 economic units in Mexico revealed that "during 2023, 2.9 million crimes were committed linked to the 1.3 million economic units (companies) victims. This was equivalent to an average of 2.2 crimes for each victim economic unit." (ENVE, 2024)

Of the 2.9 million crimes committed in 2023, 747 thousand were extortion, which represents a quarter of all.

Of these, 113 thousand corresponded to crimes of extortion on the street, in establishments or by collection of rent by organized crime in economic units, which represents 15.2%.

The most worrying thing is that in 67% of the cases, what was requested was delivered, which is equivalent to two out of every three extortion crimes. That is, for every 100 extortions committed, approximately 67 resulted in an effective payment.

A very serious problem is that the percentage of crimes against businesses that are reported in Mexico, during 2023, barely reached 12.2%, despite the fact that at least 2 million 900 thousand companies were affected.

Among the reasons for economic units not to report the crime to the authorities were, among the causes attributable to the authority 58.9%, the loss of time, with 33.4%, and, within other causes, 40.6%.

¹¹ National Institute of Statistics and Geography.

¹² National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security.

¹³ National Alliance of Small Merchants.

¹⁴ Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System.



Of the 2.9 million crimes that occurred in 2023, 90.3% (2.6 million) went unpunished, as that proportion is the so-called "hidden figure" or "black figure", which corresponds to the percentage of crimes without reporting or without initiating an investigation file.

The most frequent crime suffered by businessmen was extortion or collection of flats, with a rate of 1,562 crimes per 10 thousand economic units, corresponding to 25.5% of the total crimes committed, that is, the demand for money in exchange for the establishments not suffering any loss. This was followed by theft or assault of merchandise, money, supplies or goods, with 1,030, and ant theft, with 1,002. These crimes accounted for 58.8% of those against economic units.

The total cost in the country as a result of insecurity and crime represented an amount of 124,300 million pesos in 2023. Of this amount, 67,200 million pesos were allocated to preventive measures, and the average expenditure per economic unit was 54,451 pesos.

"These data are not cold numbers, they represent families, workers, small businessmen, small merchants who constantly live under this threat, under fear, under the fear of loss of assets, amen, of other types of stalking that go against their physical integrity and also that of their families." (Becerril & Saldierna, 2025)

According to (ENVE), in 29.8% of the crimes committed, criminals carried weapons and in 20.6% they assaulted the owner or employee of the business. (2024)

Ramón Castro Castro, bishop of Cuernavaca, Morelos, revealed that the municipality of Cuautla is being subjugated by criminal gangs that charge right of floor to tortilla shops, hamburger stalls and sugarcane companies in the area.

The extortion of tortilla shops is 50,000 pesos as an entrance fee and 10,000 pesos per month and the stall that sells hamburgers is charged a floor fee.

Zacatecas is the eighth state in Mexico with a territory almost the size of Jalisco and larger than Michoacán. It has only one and a half million inhabitants, settled in 58 municipalities, each with a municipal seat and an endless number of small and medium-sized ranches, except for the large cities such as Zacatecas, Fresnillo, Guadalupe and Jerez that are at the center of the road networks of strategic relevance to bring drugs to the northern border. especially Texas.

The main cities have become dangerous territories that are difficult to control due to their size since they are strategically crucial where different organized crime groups coexist and compete, among which the Sinaloa Cartel (CS) and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) stand out.



"The cartels that dispute Zacatecas have a meticulous control of the territory. Everything that happens is recorded by hawks (watchmen) or checked by checkpoints." (Aguilar Camín, 2023)

In Zacatecas there are two authorities: the formal one of the government and the real one of organized crime.

The cartels do not live from drug trafficking, but from extorting society.

"Fresnillo, which is at the heart of this war, reported in 2022 the closure of one thousand 600 medium and small businesses - out of a total of almost 4 thousand - abandoned by their owners with losses of about 10 thousand jobs, due to the extortion pressures they faced." (Lomnitz, 2023)

Two out of five businesses closed in that city, with the most affected being tortilla shops, bakeries, taquerias and grocery stores, that is: "small businesses, which are usually required to pay fees of between 10,000 and 20,000 pesos per month." (Martínez, 2023)

In the municipality of Sombrerete, a city of 20 thousand inhabitants controlled by the Sinaloa cartel, only the cartel can sell cigarettes, or beer; bean producers must pay 1,000 pesos per ton; cattle buyers, 400 pesos per animal.

Organized crime runs local prostitution, steals trailers on the highway, and forces farmers to sell their produce within their municipality to charge for transactions.

In many municipalities, organized crime charges for the holding of the patron saint festivities of towns and parishes, where it has a monopoly on the sale of beer.

Everyone knows that if they don't pay, they will be violated, kidnapped or killed.

The social presence of crime has become normalized. "They don't take care of themselves anymore, they don't cover their faces, we all know who they are." (Lomnitz, 2023)

The National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE) 2024 prepared by INEGI, in its section on victimization of companies, reveals that extortion was the crime most reported by economic units: micro, small, medium and large. One in 4 companies that were victims of a crime was due to extortion.

In the first half of 2025, the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (SESNSP) reported an increase in extortion victims, reaching an all-time high. 5,887 victims were registered, which represents an increase of 6.8% compared to the same period of the previous year. The states with the highest number of victims were: the State of Mexico leads with 1,481 victims, followed by Guanajuato (787), Mexico City (662), Nuevo León (500) and Veracruz (479).

"The states where businesses pay the highest fees are: Guerrero: 50 thousand pesos; Aguascalientes: from 1 thousand to 50 thousand pesos; Mexico City: from 300 to 25 thousand



pesos; Chihuahua: from 15 to 20 thousand pesos; Jalisco from 3 thousand to 20 thousand pesos and Tabasco: from 500 to 20 thousand pesos.

For their part, the entities with the greatest impact on their sales are: Chihuahua from 70 to 80%; Guanajuato from 50 to 60%; Morelos and Chiapas 50%; Puebla and Tlaxcala from 30 to 50%; Guerrero and Mexico City: from 10 to 40%; Oaxaca: 33%; Jalisco: 25%; Tabasco and Zacatecas: from 10 to 20%." (Di Costanzo, 2024)

The expansion of this crime of extortion is associated with the profitability it generates for criminal organizations, mainly the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels that have included extortion in "one of the divisions of their criminal portfolio," which use it to finance turf wars, as well as to pay their collaborators or bribes to local authorities and police.

5 DISCUSSION

Organized crime has achieved through the collection of floor a great development in territorial extension, growth and diversification of markets that includes most of the activities of an economy, in addition to assuming municipal governance functions such as security, taxes, public works and permits.

"The National Alliance of Small Merchants (ANPEC) reports that extortion by organized crime against small, medium and large businesses represents at least 20 percent of their profits since most of the time they reach 50 thousand pesos per month and in many cases represent the disappearance or bankruptcy of the establishments." (Di Costanzo, 2024)

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) places Mexico as the world leader in "Criminal Markets" from a list made up of 193 countries in crimes such as human trafficking, financial fraud, piracy trade, drug sales and floor collection.

This organization exposes the reach that criminal groups have in Latin America's second largest economy, with a worrying upward trend in Mexico.

In this index, Mexico leads the list, followed by Burma, Iran, Nigeria and Colombia. It also reveals the penetration of organized crime in economies, highlighting the high incidence of illegal charges for protection, human trafficking, trade in synthetic drugs, cocaine, heroin and cannabis (marijuana).

"Mexican criminal groups rely heavily on extortion as a source of income, targeting individuals, small, medium and large enterprises. The rate of extortion has increased substantially in some Mexican states, while in others it has decreased. Extortion can also involve private citizens, who falsely claim to belong to criminal groups in order to obtain small extortion payments. Territorial extortion, known as "cobro de piso," has become a low-cost source of income for criminal groups. The food industry has become an increasingly frequent



target, leading to food crises and supply chain disruptions. Extortion remains a major problem in almost all Mexican cities, with municipalities in the states of Michoacán, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Morelos, Nuevo Laredo, and Mexico having the highest rates." (GI-TOC, 2023)

Organized crime in Mexico has taken over brands, products and goods. This phenomenon distorts the market and generates control of territory throughout the country and corrupts state institutions through bribery and intimidation.

Organized crime is no longer only dedicated to drug trafficking, but has expanded its activities to illegal businesses, such as extortion, the collection of rent also called "criminal tax", oil theft, human trafficking, kidnapping, with which they obtain billions of dollars a year. Criminal cells also have legal businesses, although the vast majority have generally been acquired the hard way, or work with criminals in money laundering.

This would not be possible without the complicity of people from the business, financial or government sectors.

Mexican cartels foment violence throughout the country, using various firearms, including those for military use, which causes brutal confrontations with rival cartels for territorial control and with different state public security institutions.

"Weapons for organized crime arrive in Mexico mainly from the United States, since between 70% and 90% of the pistols that appeared at crime scenes in the country were manufactured in the United States. Drug cartels get guns in Texas and Arizona and smuggle them across the border." (Pacheco Ortiz, 2024)

"Paying the right of floor does not guarantee security; on the contrary, it subjects the victim to constant exploitation and increases the risk of suffering greater property damage, even losing their property and business if it is profitable for the criminals; Faced with these facts, many victims prefer not to report it." (Flores Meza, 2024)

Businessmen and merchants, in their legitimate search for protection by the state, deprive it of its ability to guarantee security to all the inhabitants of a given population, whether rural or urban.

Some protection alternatives that entrepreneurs and merchants have access to are:

Selective: where some members of the business sector have close relationships with some influential public servants who make up the security institutions (secretaries of Public Security, those responsible for the region in the Army or the National Guard or chiefs of the Municipal Police). In the face of a criminal threat, businessmen usually seek protection from these officials.



This type of protection is not illegal but it is selective, since it is not available to any entrepreneur, but only to the best positioned in the market, so it takes a call for them to activate the protection of the state for themselves.

Private: businessmen hire bodyguards or bodyguards who are part of private security companies. This type of protection is only accessible to those who can afford it.

Privatized: police officers are commissioned to take care of a businessman or his family, or they receive extra financial compensation for providing protection to a member of this sector.

Criminal: here an exchange between victim and perpetrator is established: money for protection. Businessmen who pay dues know that they are exempt from the visit of common thieves or members of another criminal group, since the criminal protector does not allow them to approach the establishment.

"The common factor of these types of protection is that businessmen and businesswomen solve the problem individually, perhaps benefiting a small group of their close ones. The level of protection they achieve depends on the resources they have to obtain it: money, relationships, position, reputation, etc. Although it solves the problem of some citizens, in the long term this form of protection weakens the State for at least two reasons. First, because as long as these few people are protected, they will not use their power or resources to demand adequate public security policies to solve the problems that citizens as a whole face. Second, because the public resources used to provide protection – from human capital to uniforms or patrols – are used in a discriminatory way and are not necessarily allocated to the most vulnerable sectors. The services provided are no longer truly public." (Martínez Trujillo, 2023)

6 CONCLUSION

"The federal government has allowed the crime of extortion to grow due to the lack of a clear strategy to combat it, deficiencies in management and investigation, and lack of support for the states." (Baranda, 2024)

It has resorted to militarization to combat organized crime but with little success. Their efforts to combat corruption and organized crime have been symbolic.

Corruption and complicity between criminal groups and State actors aggravate impunity for criminals, and State efforts to combat crime and violence throughout the country have not been successful.



The rate of homicides, kidnappings, human trafficking and forced disappearances continues to be high and cases of femicide, extortion against merchants with the collection of rent, violence against journalists, among other crimes, have increased.

Political violence has also become frequent, with criminal groups threatening and assassinating political candidates.

Organized crime interferes in electoral processes through campaign financing, interference in candidate selection processes and acts of intimidation and coercion of voters and political operators, with which it seeks to control local governments to access privileged information "about the public security strategies that will be implemented in the municipality, against them, against their adversaries, or against economic groups that operate in the region, from which they can implement extortion schemes and land use charges." (Integralia, 2021)

Electoral processes are periods of uncertainty for organized crime, as there are no guarantees that the new elected representatives will maintain or enter into schemes of collusion and corruption. For this reason, they seek to intervene in the electoral results to guarantee the triumph of figures related to their interests, through different strategies, among which are the financing of political campaigns with the use of resources of illicit origin (the result of criminal activities). Illicit financing far exceeds legal financing.

In Mexico this situation has become a great challenge for the State, since various cartels have financed political campaigns and would have political control of some City Councils, there is even talk of Narco-State.

Mexico is plagued by corruption embedded in the state, with officials at various levels facilitating organized criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, oil theft (huachicol) and extortion.

This complicity not only directs substantial amounts of illicit proceeds towards high-ranking officials, but also weakens law enforcement agencies, hindering the country's fight against organized crime.

There are also reports suggesting the permanence of corrupt practices within the federal institutions charged with combating organized crime. However, corruption at the local level, such as that which exists among state and municipal officials, remains a more significant concern, due to the lower financial cost of collusion with low-level officials and their deeper knowledge of the territories they govern.

Organized crime has managed to exert a remarkable influence on Mexico's democratic process, allegedly doing everything possible to ensure the election and/or re-election of key political allies, including the assassination of politicians perceived as threats.



It would be advisable to dilute the links between organized crime and corruption.

This year (2025) the government of Claudia Sheinbaum presented a National Strategy against Extortion that contains five axes: generate arrests through investigation and intelligence; encourage the creation of local anti-extortion units; applying the protocol for attention to victims; training 089 operators in crisis management and negotiation and implementing a national prevention campaign.

This strategy will have the participation of the Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF) of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) for the freezing of bank accounts where extortion collections are deposited.

The UIF's participation aims to attack the finances of those who engage in extortion, through the freezing of bank accounts linked to illicit collections to cut off the flow of resources that feed these criminal networks. This action not only weakens its operational structure, but also directly protects the victims' assets.

The head of the Federal Executive recognized that extortion is the high-impact crime that the Federal Government has not been able to reduce, and that it continues to increase.

On September 24, 2025, the Senate of the Republic unanimously approved the initiative presented on July 10 of the same year by President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, which amends subsection a) section XXI of Article 73 of the Constitution to provide the Congress of the Union with the power to issue a General Law against Extortion that allows the prosecution of this crime throughout the country. protect the victims, that the State assumes itself as a victim and attends to the crime. The victim is all of us, the victim is the State.

The goal is clear. "Extortion will be prosecuted ex officio. The victim of extortion should not be left to report it, because normally the victim of extortion, and rightly so, is afraid to report because of the effects that this may have." (Caporal & Vázquez, 2025)

The Congress of the Union will have the power to issue a law that unifies criteria, closes legal loopholes and comprehensively protects society by establishing a homogeneous framework and the coordination of the three levels of government to prevent, investigate and punish extortion under the same national model, since the disparity of criteria in the state and federal penal codes is one of the reasons why it is so It is difficult to prosecute this crime, which ends in impunity most of the time due to the fear of Mexicans. While at the federal level the penalty is from two to eight years, in Oaxaca the sentences range from one to three years, and in Chihuahua they range from five to 30 years. This disparity must be corrected.

The decree amending the Constitution on extortion was immediately sent to the Congresses of the 32 states for ratification.



The 089 number is already enabled for victims to report anonymously and from this complaint an investigation process begins by the specialized unit against extortion, this thanks to the new National Law of the Investigation and Intelligence System.

If it is an extortion via telephone, there is communication with the telephone companies so that they immediately download the phone number of where they are extorting, that they disable it.

If it is face-to-face, the information is taken and an investigation unit is deployed to investigate the extortion.

The head of the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection (SSPC), Omar García Harfuch said that "arresting those who commit this crime is a direct way to protect the livelihood of thousands of working families who every day, with effort and honesty, build businesses, cultivate the land, transport goods or provide services."

He specified that this strategy is possible thanks to the new Law of the National Investigation and Intelligence System, which allows strengthening investigations, in addition to expanding the capacities to dismantle criminal networks and arrest generators of violence related to extortion.

He added that on the instructions of President Sheinbaum Pardo, he is in charge of confronting extortion with the force of state institutions.

"The National Strategy against Extortion presented by the Federal Government represents an indispensable step in the face of a crime that seriously affects the productive sector and violates the security of millions of people. We appreciate the promotion of a coordinated response between the Ministry of Security and Citizen Protection, the Ministry of National Defense (SEDENA), the Secretariat of the Navy, the Attorney General's Office (FGR), the National Guard and the National Intelligence Center (CNI). However, despite the fact that the Employers' Confederation of the Mexican Republic (COPARMEX) agrees on the urgency of this initiative, we warn that, in order for it to have a real impact, it must be accompanied by profound legal reforms that guarantee its effectiveness." (COPARMEX, 2025)

"According to businessmen, in our country every day 32.3 people are victims of extortion, which together generated losses of more than 26 billion pesos in 2024. They stressed that Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are the basis of our economy and generate 65% of formal jobs in Mexico; and yet they are the most affected by extortion, since they have fewer resources to protect themselves. For this reason, the strategy against this crime must include special support for them, such as rapid attention, legal advice



and prevention programs, so that they can continue to grow without fear." (Caporal & Vázquez, 2025)

Organized crime in the Mexican economy is a challenge that requires comprehensive, long-term solutions and the collaboration of all sectors of society.

If the offender goes directly to the business to request a payment in exchange for not harming the property or family, the following recommendations should be followed:

Do not immediately give in to demands and remain calm; not to express a direct refusal to the offender; ask for a deadline to get the money requested, which will allow analyzing the scenario and requesting help from the authorities of the State Prosecutor's Office, where specialist personnel will attend to the case and report any intimidation, threat and collection of economic fees to 089.

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