

Mexico Political Chatter

16 July 2026

The week was marked by two crises that shook the ruling party. In the case of Baja California Governor Marina del Pilar, a new leaked audio revealed her intention to cooperate with U.S. authorities and provide information about the security roundtables to resolve her immigration situation and avoid sanctions. After acknowledging that the leaked audios are real, the governor claimed they were obtained through a ruse orchestrated by her predecessor, fellow Morena member Jaime Bonilla, who immediately rejected any involvement and accused her of seeking a "favorite villain" to divert attention.

Sheinbaum closed ranks with the Baja California governor and argued that her case is not comparable to that of Chihuahua Governor Maru Campos, since the audios establish neither the delivery of confidential information nor the commission of a crime. The case has not gone unnoticed by the opposition, which is now calling for Marina del Pilar to be investigated and demanding that she request a leave of absence. As for Bonilla, the case coincides with the former governor's recent overtures to local PRI leaders in Baja California.

The Sinaloa case also added new revelations that put the spotlight on the Attorney General's Office. The FGR admitted that it did not know the true identity and role of Mauro Alberto Núñez Ojeda, "El Jando," when he was arrested in Culiacán in February 2025 and subsequently extradited without knowing that he was the pilot who transported "El Mayo" Zambada to U.S. territory. To this was added the resignation of Ulises Lara, special prosecutor and FGR spokesperson, considered one of Ernestina Godoy's closest operators, reportedly following the judicial setback in the Agronitrogenados case and the detention of Gilda Lozoya, sister of former Pemex director Emilio Lozoya.

In contrast, President Sheinbaum touted a historic reduction in homicides: the daily average fell 48% between September 2024 and June 2026, dropping from 86.9 to 45.4 victims per day, making June the month with the fewest murders since 2015. Nevertheless, eight states concentrate 51.8% of the country's homicides.

The defense of migrants opened another front of tension in the bilateral relationship. Following the deaths of Mexicans in ICE custody, Sheinbaum sought to build a state front and invited all political forces to back international legal actions, but the PRI, PAN, and Movimiento Ciudadano refused to join, accusing the ruling party of trying to politically capitalize on the crisis. The episode confirms that, even in the face of a humanitarian crisis with Washington, polarization continues to hinder consensus; although, as Denise Maerker notes, the call for a truce on the domestic front reveals a possible shift in the federal government's strategy.

Finally, two cases reignited deeper debates. The CNDH's new recommendation on Ayotzinapa concluded that there are no elements to sustain that the Army participated in the disappearance of the 43 students or that a counterinsurgency plan existed, a stance that contrasts with previous official

narratives and that triggered strong reactions from those who accuse it of seeking to protect the Armed Forces. On the judicial front, the Supreme Court concluded its first session period with an unusual internal call for unity and respect among justices.

Marina del Pilar sinks into crisis over leaked audios

The political crisis of Marina del Pilar Ávila entered a new phase after the Baja California governor acknowledged that the leaked audios are real, but claimed they were obtained through a ruse orchestrated by her predecessor, Jaime Bonilla. According to her account, the conversation took place in December 2025, when Bonilla introduced her to alleged contacts with U.S. authorities who could purportedly help her resolve the revocation of her visa. The Morena governor maintained that she acted in good faith, that the identity of those people was never verified, and that she was the victim of a "trap" and an espionage operation with political ends. She also denied having compromised national security information or having acted against the country's interests, while announcing that she is considering legal action.

Bonilla's response, also a member of the 4T, was immediate. The former governor rejected any involvement in the alleged operation, denied having organized meetings with U.S. officials or intermediaries, and dismissed Marina del Pilar's accusations, accusing her of seeking a "favorite villain" to divert attention from the scandal. Bonilla maintained that he had no part in the recording or the leaking of the audios and asserted that it will be the governor herself who must explain the content of the conversations and the steps she took to try to recover her U.S. visa.

From the National Palace, President Claudia Sheinbaum closed ranks with the Baja California governor and maintained that her case cannot be compared to that of Chihuahua Governor Maru Campos. She argued that, unlike other files, the audios of Marina del Pilar establish neither the delivery of confidential information nor the commission of a crime, and that there is not even certainty about the identity of the people she was speaking with. The crisis began in May 2026, when the United States revoked the visas of Governor Marina del Pilar Ávila and her then-husband, Carlos Torres, without disclosing the reasons. Weeks later, the couple announced their divorce, amid the growing political pressure over the case.

 [El Universal: Jaime Bonilla rejects involvement in Marina del Pilar case; the governor "brings out her favorite villain," he says](#)

FGR admits error in the case of "El Mayo's" pilot

The Attorney General's Office acknowledged that it did not know the true identity and role of Mauro Alberto Núñez Ojeda, "El Jando," when he was arrested in Culiacán in February 2025. The alleged operator identified himself with a false name and, months later, was extradited to the United States without Mexican authorities knowing that he was the pilot who transported Ismael "El Mayo"

Zambada to U.S. territory in July 2024. The FGR stated that it was only able to establish his identity after a subsequent fingerprint analysis and information exchange with U.S. authorities.

The revelation revived doubts about the investigation into "El Mayo's" capture and the coordination between Mexico and the United States. While President Claudia Sheinbaum defended that the handover of "El Jando" was carried out with the information available at the time, the case exposes an intelligence failure that prevented the identification of one of the protagonists of one of the most significant operations against the Sinaloa Cartel.

 [El País: The FGR admits it did not know the identity of El Mayo Zambada's pilot and his role in the Sinaloa Cartel when he was arrested](#)

Ulises Lara, Ernestina Godoy's key operator at the FGR, resigns

Ulises Lara submitted his resignation as special prosecutor for the Investigation of Relevant Affairs and FGR spokesperson, just six months after taking office. Although in his letter he cited "strictly personal reasons," his departure comes after the judicial setback in the Agronitrogenados case, which nullified the arrest warrant against Gilda Lozoya, sister of former Pemex director Emilio Lozoya, and amid questions over high-profile investigations handled by the Prosecutor's Office. Lara was considered one of Attorney General Ernestina Godoy's closest collaborators and a key piece in the institution's legal strategy.

From the National Palace, President Claudia Sheinbaum avoided speculating on the reasons for the resignation and stressed that it is exclusively up to the FGR to explain the official's departure. The resignation leaves vacant one of the most relevant posts in the Prosecutor's Office at a time of pressure over cases such as that of "El Mayo" Zambada, Sinaloa, and other high-impact files that keep the institution under scrutiny.

 [Aristegui Noticias: Ulises Lara resigns from the FGR after the prosecution's setback in the Agronitrogenados case](#)

Sheinbaum touts historic reduction in homicides

The federal government reported that the daily average of intentional homicides decreased 48% between September 2024 and June 2026, dropping from 86.9 to 45.4 victims per day, making June of this year the month with the fewest murders since 2015. President Claudia Sheinbaum highlighted that the reduction represents 41 fewer homicides each day compared to the start of her administration and attributed the results to the National Security Strategy. Nevertheless, the report also notes that eight states concentrate 51.8% of the country's homicides, led by Guanajuato, Baja California, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and the State of Mexico.

 [Proceso: Sheinbaum reports 48% fewer intentional homicides in Mexico between September 2024 and June 2026](#)

MX The defense of migrants opens another political front for the 4T

The offensive by Claudia Sheinbaum's government to respond to the deaths of Mexicans in ICE custody in the United States opened a new front of internal confrontation. The president sought to build a state front and invited all political forces to back legal actions and international investigations in defense of Mexican nationals; however, the PRI, PAN, and Movimiento Ciudadano refused to join on those terms, accusing the ruling party of trying to politically capitalize on the crisis and use it to strengthen its narrative against Washington.

The opposition's refusal was answered by Morena, whose leaders lamented the lack of unity on an issue they consider a national cause. The episode reflects that, even in the face of a humanitarian and diplomatic crisis with the United States, political polarization continues to hinder the building of consensus, while the defense of migrants also becomes a new battleground between government and opposition.

 [El País: The defense of Mexicans abroad opens another front between the government and the opposition](#)

⚠ Ayotzinapa reopens the dispute over the truth

The CNDH's new recommendation on the Ayotzinapa case reignited controversy by concluding that there are no elements to sustain that the Army participated in the disappearance of the 43 students or that a counterinsurgency plan existed, a stance that contrasts with investigations and official narratives promoted in recent years. The document, more than 800 pages long, also questions the work of the GIEI and proposes new lines of analysis on the construction of the case, while maintaining that there were serious human rights violations and deficiencies in the investigations.

The conclusions provoked a strong reaction from those who participated in the investigation of the case. The former head of the CNDH's own Special Office for Ayotzinapa accused the recommendation of seeking to protect members of the Armed Forces and officials involved, as well as representing a setback in the search for truth and justice. The publication revived one of the country's most sensitive debates: the Army's role in the case and the dispute over the official narrative of one of the most emblematic human rights files in Mexico.

 [Expansión Política: Ayotzinapa case: CNDH absolves the Armed Forces... but previously documented their involvement](#)

🏛 The Court goes into recess with a call for unity

The Supreme Court of Justice concluded its first ordinary session period with an unusual internal call to prioritize respect among justices, dialogue, and reconciliation, amid the first months of operation of the new composition elected by popular vote. During the closing session, Justice Giovanni Figueroa maintained that dissent should strengthen, not divide, the highest court, while the Court's president, Hugo Aguilar Ortiz, affirmed that the construction of an "open and people-facing" justice system continues. The Plenary entered recess and will resume activities on August 3, leaving as its central message the search for institutional cohesion in a stage of transformation of the Judicial Branch.

 [El Universal: Court closes first session period; justices call for respect among peers](#)

The mystery of the Puebla businessman-sniper case

The arrest of Rafael Zabalza, a 65-year-old Spanish pharmaceutical businessman based in Puebla, put an end to the mystery of the so-called "Vía Atlixcáyotl sniper," responsible for a series of firearm attacks against motorists that sowed fear for months in one of the city's most exclusive areas. The Puebla Prosecutor's Office investigation identified the alleged perpetrator through surveillance cameras and ballistic technology, while searches of his properties led to the seizure of an arsenal of weapons, some of them military-grade. The case has generated impact due to the profile of the detainee, a businessman with no criminal record and ties to the pharmaceutical and academic sectors, whose double life has surprised public opinion.

 [El País: Rafael Zabalza, the Spanish pharmacist who was a sniper in Puebla in his free time](#)

Opinion express

- **In new audio, Marina del Pilar offers to collaborate with the FBI — Héctor de Mauleón**
Héctor de Mauleón argues that a new audio further compromises the situation of Baja California Governor Marina del Pilar Ávila, showing her willing to share information obtained in the security roundtables with the FBI in exchange for resolving her immigration situation in the United States. The columnist questions the gravity of a state governor raising such a possibility and warns that the case transcends the visa revocation to become a matter of national security and institutional trust.

 [El Universal: In new audio, Marina del Pilar offers to collaborate with the FBI](#)

- **Good at not telling the truth; bad at lying — Salvador Camarena**
Salvador Camarena argues that Morena has developed a political strategy based on concealing information, denying evident facts, and constructing implausible explanations in the face of crises. Drawing on the Marina del Pilar case and other recent episodes, the columnist argues that the ruling party tends to react late and with contradictory versions that

end up deepening public erosion. For the author, the main problem is no longer opacity, but the government's inability to sustain convincing narratives when facing scandals.

 [El Financiero: Good at not telling the truth; bad at lying](#)

- **The truce — Denise Maerker**
Maerker analyzes the call that President Claudia Sheinbaum made to all political parties, Congress, and society to join the demand to clarify the circumstances in which 17 Mexicans have died at the hands of ICE agents or in detention centers in the United States, following the death of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Houston on July 7. The columnist recalls that ICE's lethal violence is not new and is already a source of scandal in that country, but what is unprecedented is the call for common action by all political groups: only once since the start of the 4T had an act of national unity been convened, when López Obrador gathered governors and legislators in Tijuana in June 2019 in the face of Trump's tariff threats.

 [Milenio: The truce](#)

- **Democracy in crisis — Luis Carlos Ugalde**
Ugalde argues that the United States, as it turns 250, is going through one of the deepest crises of its democracy, comparing it to a house in dispute whose inhabitants tear down their own foundations. The columnist identifies as the "cancer" of that democracy the difficulty of fully integrating the African American population and other groups outside the white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant mold. That malaise, he argues, found in Donald Trump a leader who did not create the tensions but gave them voice and organization, turning fear of cultural change into electoral force and extending that logic to institutions. Ugalde situates the pressure on Mexico: for part of the U.S. electorate, the country represents the visible origin of a threat that combines migrants, fentanyl, cartels, and loss of border control. His conclusion is that the pressure will continue even if the Republicans lose November's midterm elections, because the forces that made Trump possible will still be there.

 [Reforma: Democracy in crisis](#)

Agenda in brief

July 19 | Morena profiles its hopefuls for 2027. Morena's National Elections Commission will release the validated registrations of 277 hopefuls seeking to compete for the candidacies to the 17 governorships that will be at stake in 2027. The publication will mark the formal start of the vetting of profiles and of the internal process that will conclude with the polls to define the party's candidates.

July 19 | The world meets its new champion. The 2026 World Cup will come to an end with the grand final at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey between Spain and Argentina, where the new champion of the tournament organized by the United States, Mexico, and Canada will be decided.

