

Mexico Political Chatter

August 6, 2026

The confrontation between the Mexican government and the media remained at the forefront of the political debate. The controversy over the guidelines on audience rights escalated from the technical to the political sphere: while the government insists that the regulation does not imply censorship, concessionaires, journalists, and the opposition warn that the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission could exercise discretionary powers over freedom of expression. As Sergio Sarmiento and Jesús Silva-Herzog Márquez warn, the underlying risk is not the regulation itself, but the intent to have the authority determine which information is true or false.

In parallel, President Claudia Sheinbaum signed a decree strengthening the transparency obligations of the Federal Public Administration, with monthly publication of contracts, audits, and information from Pemex and CFE, in response to criticism over the elimination of INAI, and announced that in September she will send Congress a reform to consolidate the new model.

Security once again marked the bilateral relationship. Donald Trump's government intensified its offensive against the CJNG, designated a foreign terrorist organization, with new indictments, more than 100 million dollars in rewards, and visa restrictions on 65 people linked to the organization. DEA head Terry Cole included in his accusations "members of the Mexican government" who allegedly shield the cartel's leadership, raising the tone of the accusations over collusion between politics and organized crime.

From Mexico, INEGI recorded 27,989 deaths from presumed homicide in 2025, a 16.6% reduction compared to 2024 and the lowest annual level since 2016, according to preliminary figures. Nevertheless, the report itself shows that seven out of ten murders are still committed with a firearm. Violence also maintained two worrying expressions: organized crime has killed at least 19 influencers since 2024 (eight of them in Sinaloa, including César Gastélum, murdered during a live broadcast in Culiacán), and fuel theft once again struck Pemex's finances, with the company losing 9.18 billion pesos between April and June, an average of 101 million per day.

Insecurity also reached agri-food trade. The United States temporarily suspended USDA inspections in Michoacán following a security alert against U.S. interests, halting avocado shipments to that market. As Ricardo Raphael warns, the measure could imply losses of close to 20 million dollars per day for Michoacán's agricultural sector, a state that concentrates nearly 90% of Mexican avocado exports to the United States, in an episode that revives similar disruptions that occurred in 2022 and 2024.

In the run-up to the 2027 electoral process, new signals raise doubts about the consistency of Morena's anti-corruption discourse: an analysis by El Universal revealed that three out of ten 4T hopefuls for the 17 governorships at stake present omissions or incomplete information in their asset, interest, or tax declarations. On the electoral front, the INE's decision to order the PRI to remove the posts labeling Morena a "narco-party" opened a debate over the limits of the electoral authority in the face of freedom of expression, which, as Luis Carlos Ugalde argues, should be resolved through public debate and evidence, not administrative censorship.

Finally, the crisis over the UNAM entrance exam took a decisive turn: the university terminated ahead of schedule its contract with Territorium Life, the company in charge of operating the digital platform where anomalies were detected, and will administer an in-person control exam from August 12 to 19 for some 58,000 applicants, with the aim of validating the results and restoring the credibility of the process.

Transparency and audiences: the 4T's new fronts

President Claudia Sheinbaum took a step to respond to criticism over the elimination of INAI by signing a decree that strengthens the transparency obligations of the Federal Public Administration. The measure orders the monthly publication of contracts, audits, and information from Pemex and CFE, in addition to reducing the grounds for classifying information, as part of an anti-corruption overhaul that seeks to strengthen access to information through the Secretariat of Anti-Corruption and Good Governance. The Executive announced that in September it will send Congress a reform to consolidate this new model.

At the same time, the controversy over the new guidelines on audience rights escalated from the technical to the political sphere. While Sheinbaum insists that the regulation does not imply censorship and that it will be the media themselves, through their codes of ethics and audience ombudsmen, who distinguish between information and opinion, concessionaires, journalists, specialists, and opposition parties warn that the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission could exercise discretionary powers that affect freedom of expression. Even within Morena, voices emerged proposing adjustments to avoid censorial interpretations. The public consultation will remain open until August 21, in a debate that already goes beyond the media and has become a discussion about the limits of the State's regulatory power.

 [El País: Sheinbaum takes the first step in her anti-corruption overhaul with a decree that shields transparency](#)

 [El País: The controversy over audience rights escalates to the center of the political debate in Mexico](#)

4T hopefuls under scrutiny for asset opacity

On the eve of Morena defining its candidacies for the 17 governorships that will be at stake in 2027, an analysis by El Universal reveals that three out of ten 4T hopefuls present omissions or incomplete information in their asset, interest, or tax declarations. Of the 111 public officials seeking to compete for a candidacy, several left gaps regarding assets, income, or possible conflicts of interest, while others did not submit the entirety of their "3 of 3" declaration. The finding takes on relevance at a time when the federal government is pushing an agenda of fighting corruption and greater transparency. Although Morena has made accountability one of its main banners, the review exposes inconsistencies in the asset information of several of its profiles heading into the 2027 electoral process, reviving the debate over the consistency between the anti-corruption discourse and the party's internal practices.

 [El Universal: Three out of ten 4T gubernatorial hopefuls leave gaps about their assets; 111 officials seek candidacies](#)

Homicides fall to their lowest level in a decade, but differences in the figures persist

Mexico recorded 27,989 deaths from presumed homicide during 2025, a 16.6% reduction compared to 2024, according to preliminary INEGI figures. It is the lowest annual level since 2016, and the national rate fell from 25.8 to 21.4 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, a figure the federal government presents as evidence that the security strategy has begun to yield results. However, the report itself shows that seven out of ten murders

are still committed with a firearm, confirming that violence linked to organized crime remains the main challenge.

The report also reignited the debate over the measurement of violence in Mexico. While INEGI counted 27,989 homicides, the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System reported 25,955 victims for the same period, a difference of just over 2,000 cases stemming from the methodology used by each institution: INEGI is based on death certificates and forensic records, while the Secretariat uses investigation files from the prosecutors' offices. Specialists consider that both statistics are complementary and agree on a downward trend, though they warn that the preliminary figures will need to be confirmed and that the national reduction does not eliminate the sharp contrasts between states with high levels of violence.

 [Animal Político: 2025: the largest gap in homicides between INEGI and the Executive Secretariat in a decade](#)

US United States offers 100 million dollars for CJNG leaders and warns it will go after them "wherever they are"

Donald Trump's government announced the intensification of its offensive against the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), designated a "foreign terrorist organization," with a new indictment against its leaders, millionaire rewards, visa revocations for the gang's associates, and the warning that it will pursue the accused on both sides of the border. The State Department offered more than 100 million dollars in rewards for information leading to the arrest of the eight CJNG leaders and associates, with an increase to 25 million dollars for "El Pelón" and 2 million for Griselda Margarita Arredondo Pinzón, half-sister of "El Tarjetas." It also reported visa restrictions on 65 individuals linked to families or associates of cartel bosses. Blanche warned that the government will use "every tool to bring these defendants to justice, no matter where they are." DEA head Terry Cole asserted that the CJNG sustains its power "through violence and corruption in Mexico," and included in that accusation "members of the Mexican government, who shield the cartel's leadership from justice, facilitate drug trafficking, money laundering, and violence."

 [La Jornada: U.S. offers 100 million dollars for CJNG leaders; it will go after them "wherever they are"](#)

 **Organized crime targets influencers: 19 killed since 2024**

At least 19 influencers have been murdered in eight states across the country from 2024 to date, according to a tally by El Universal. The record documents four murders in 2024, eleven in 2025, and four so far in 2026. Sinaloa concentrates eight cases, followed by Guerrero with three, Jalisco and Nuevo León with two each, and Baja California, Chiapas, Morelos, and Guanajuato with one per state. The most recent case occurred on Tuesday night in Culiacán, when César Gastélum —with more than 700,000 followers on TikTok and a YouTube channel— was murdered during a live broadcast. Security specialist David Saucedo explained that criminal organizations use some influencers to spread their agendas, but also target them to censor information that affects them.

 [El Universal: Narco targets influencers; 19 of them have been killed](#)

Fuel theft deepens Pemex's financial crisis

Hydrocarbon theft continues to hit Pemex's finances. Between April and June 2026 alone, the company lost 9.18 billion pesos, an average of 101 million pesos per day, due to the illegal extraction of crude oil, gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel. According to its financial report, this is the largest impact recorded for a comparable period since 2018 and represents a 20% increase over the same quarter of the previous year, despite the operations implemented to combat this crime. The figure shows that fuel theft remains one of the main challenges for the oil company and for public finances. In addition to affecting Pemex's sales, the illegal fuel market also reduces tax revenue and reflects the persistence of criminal networks capable of operating both in pipelines and in more sophisticated schemes of hydrocarbon theft and commercialization.

 [El Universal: Pemex loses 101 million pesos daily to fuel theft; crude, gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel stolen](#)

Insecurity strikes Mexican avocado once again

Violence in Michoacán once again struck one of the country's main agri-food exports. The United States temporarily suspended Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspections in the state following a security alert against U.S. interests, forcing a halt to avocado shipments to that market. Without the presence of the inspectors, an indispensable requirement to certify shipments, only fruit received before the suspension can be processed, while producers and authorities seek to restore operations. The episode revives a recurring problem in the avocado-growing region, where insecurity and the presence of organized crime have caused similar disruptions in 2022 and 2024. Michoacán concentrates nearly 90% of Mexican avocado exports to the United States, so any suspension represents an economic risk for thousands of producers and workers, in addition to exposing the impact that violence continues to have on strategic sectors of the national economy.

 [Reforma: U.S. halts Michoacán avocado imports over insecurity](#)

UNAM breaks with the exam company and seeks to restore trust

The crisis over the digital undergraduate admission exam continues to escalate. UNAM confirmed that it terminated ahead of schedule its contract with Territorium Life, the company in charge of operating the platform where anomalies were detected that forced a rethinking of the admission process. In parallel, the university is maintaining the administration of an in-person control exam from August 12 to 19 for around 58,000 applicants, with the aim of validating the results and restoring the credibility of the selection process. The decision also entailed modifying the school calendar for incoming students.

Beyond the contract's cancellation, specialists warn that the episode exposed two underlying problems: the risks of migrating critical processes to technological platforms without sufficient controls, and the insufficient supply of spaces in higher education. Academics consulted by Excelsior argue that the pressure of tens of thousands of applicants for a limited number of places turns any failure in the admission system into a high-impact institutional crisis, while the break with Territorium Life marks UNAM's attempt to deflect responsibility and restore trust in one of the university's most important processes.

 [Reforma: UNAM will administer a new exam from August 12 to 19](#)

 Opinion express

- **Lying to censor — Sergio Sarmiento.** Sarmiento accuses President Claudia Sheinbaum of using a 26-year-old video of himself out of context to discredit his criticism of the new guidelines on audience rights. The journalist argues that this action contradicts the principles of truthfulness and contextualization that the government itself claims to defend, and warns that the regulation could become a mechanism of pressure on critical media. Although he positively acknowledges the decree to reduce the grounds for classifying public information, he insists that the guidelines represent a risk to freedom of expression.

 [Reforma: Lying to censor](#)

- **Operation avocado — Ricardo Raphael, *Milenio*.** Raphael argues that, a day after Donald Trump accused Mexico of harming the U.S. economy with its export policies, that country's Department of Agriculture dealt a severe blow to Mexican agricultural exports by effectively closing its border to Michoacán's agricultural exports. Raphael estimates that, for as long as it lasts, the measure will imply losses of close to 20 million dollars per day for Michoacán's agricultural sector. He warns that the impact will be enormous, since, being perishables that the domestic market cannot fully consume, entire harvests will be lost, with severe harm to the families who work in a labor-intensive sector. His conclusion is that, contrary to what one might wish to assume, Trump "is a dog that barks and bites," and the operation that closes off the export of Michoacán avocado, berries, and lime is deeply worrying.

 [Milenio: Operation avocado](#)

- **Narco-debate — Luis Carlos Ugalde.** Ugalde questions the INE's decision to order the removal of PRI posts labeling Morena a "narco-party" and the government a "narco-government." The former IFE president argues that the underlying debate is not whether those accusations are exaggerated, but how far the electoral authority can go in limiting political expression during the confrontation between parties. In his view, the best response to controversial claims should be public debate and evidence, not administrative censorship, since it could set a precedent that restricts freedom of expression in future contests.

 [Reforma: Narco-debate](#)

- **Commission of Truth — Jesús Silva-Herzog Márquez.** Silva-Herzog Márquez criticizes the government's defense of the new guidelines on audience rights and argues that freedom of expression cannot depend on the will of those in power. The columnist warns that the risk is not only the regulation itself, but the intent to have the authority determine which information is true or false, which would open the door to a "commission of truth" incompatible with a liberal democracy. In his view, the best antidote against disinformation remains an open, plural society with free media, not a State that assumes the role of arbiter of truth.

 [Reforma: Commission of Truth](#)

 Agenda in brief

July 27 – August 21 | The public consultation on the general guidelines for the protection of audience rights remains open. Citizens, concessionaires, academia, and civil organizations can submit their proposals as part of the implementation of the new Telecommunications and Broadcasting Law.

Late August | Morena plans to publish the calls for the registration of hopefuls for the 500 district coordinations and municipalities ahead of the 2027 elections, after postponing the process — which was to begin on August 3 — in order to strengthen the selection filters and avoid candidacies with criminal records or legal problems.