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Mexico: Situation of homosexuals in Guadalajara and whether there are support or advocacy groups acting on their behalf

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General situation

Guadalajara is known as an important gay centre in Mexico (GAYGDL.com n.d.b), and has been referred to alternatively as a "gay-friendly" city (ibid. n.d.a; *Público* 19 Apr. 2006). According to GAYGDL.com, an online magazine listing gay venues in Guadalajara (*Travel Lady Magazine* Sept. 2005), there is a higher relative concentration of homosexuals in Guadalajara than in Mexico City (GAYGDL.com n.d.a), although this could not be corroborated by the Research Directorate. According to the Mexico City-based News Service for Sexual Diversity (Agencia de Noticias sobre la Diversidad Sexual, ANODIS), it is not uncommon to see gay couples holding hands in the city's streets (6 Sept. 2007). *El Norte*, a Monterrey-based daily, estimates that there could be 9,000 families headed by same-sex couples in the state of Jalisco (which includes Guadalajara) (4 Mar. 2007).

Citing the Annual Report on Homophobic Crime 2005/2006 (Informe Anual de Crímenes por Homofobia 2005/2006), a document sent to the Research Directorate by a representative of Letra S, a non-profit organization based in Mexico City that seeks to raise awareness about issues related to sexuality (Letra S n.d.), reported 420 homophobic murders throughout Mexico between 1995 and 2006 (ibid. May 2008; *La Jornada* 18 May 2008; *El Proceso* 19 May 2008). Of these, 148 were reported in the Federal District (Distrito Federal), and 1 was reported in the state of Jalisco (ibid.; Letra S. May 2008). Letra S and media sources also note that for every reported murder, an estimated two went unreported (*El Proceso* 19 May 2008; *La Jornada* 18 May 2008); estimates on how many of these unreported murders occurred in the state of Jalisco or in Guadalajara could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, citing the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación, CONAPRED), the San Juan del Río daily *Rotativo de Querétaro* lists Jalisco as one of the states with the greatest number of complaints of [translation] "discrimination" against homosexuals (16 May 2008).

GAYGDL.com lists 36 nightclubs and bars, 10 gay-friendly hotels, 5 bathhouses, and 19 various gay-friendly service providers, such as boutiques, restaurants, and Internet cafés (GAYGDL.com n.d.b). According to the University of Guadalajara publication *La gaceta*, there are approximately 60 establishments within the city limits that cater to gay clientele (UDG 18 June 2007). Between 2006 and 2007, eight new gay establishments opened their doors in the city (ibid.). The city's biggest gay bar, Mónica's, can host up to 3,000 guests in one evening (ibid.). Guadalajara's gay establishments are concentrated in the city's historical quarter (ibid.).

According to *La gaceta*, despite Guadalajara's reputation as one of the most conservative cities in Mexico, there has been more societal openness in recent years toward gay men and lesbians (ibid.).

Relations with authorities

In an April 2006 article in the Guadalajara-based daily *Público*, which was republished by the Jalisco State Human Rights Commission (Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos de Jalisco, CEDHJ), a gay rights activist noted that homosexuals who frequent bars in the neighbourhood of Pedro Moreno-Chapultepec-Parque Revolución were among the groups most susceptible to arbitrary arrest by the police (*Público* 19 Apr. 2006). The activist, who heads a non-governmental organization that reports incidents of discrimination and extortion against homosexuals to local police as well as the CEDHJ, also noted that on some occasions police have threatened to publicly reveal a person's homosexual identity, for instance on "El show de la barandilla," a television program that displays footage of persons detained by police the night before (ibid.). While the head of the Department of Public Security of Guadalajara (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de Guadalajara) has stated that police officers responsible for such acts would be penalized and urged victims to make a complaint (ibid. 20 Apr. 2006), some victims were reportedly reluctant to do so for fear that this would publicize their sexuality (ibid. 19 Apr. 2006). Further or corroborating information, however, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

On 23 June 2007, the Guadalajaran daily *Mural* reported that 52 transportation department personnel were on hand to provide security (*Mural* 23 June 2007) during the city's 11th annual March for Sexual Diversity (Marcha

de la Diversidad Sexual) (ibid.; ANODIS 25 June 2007; *La Jornada Jalisco* 24 June 2007). The celebration also marked the 25th anniversary of the city's first public gay pride event (*Mural* 23 June 2007). The turnout was estimated at between 6,000 (*La Jornada Jalisco* 24 June 2007) and 7,000 people (ANODIS 25 June 2007). ANODIS reported a few anti-gay incidents, such as several homes along the parade route displaying signs with statements such as [translation] "Man plus woman equals life and happiness. Man plus man equals AIDS" (ibid.). In another incident, a protester pepper-sprayed the dance floor at a gay bar, but ANODIS reported no serious injuries (ibid.).

In February 2008, the Guadalajara daily *Mural* obtained a copy of a complaint which stated that municipal licensing authorities in Guadalajara were exerting pressure on gay and lesbian businesses in the city centre to relocate to the city's periphery (14 Feb. 2008). Shortly after, *Mural* reported that gay bars in the city's historic centre were launching a formal complaint to the CEDHJ as well as to CONAPRED because, as stated by their representative Carlos Ocegüera, the city's licensing authorities were inspecting their businesses once a month while inspecting other establishments only on an annual basis (ibid. 16 Feb. 2008). Ocegüera further stated that Juan Manuel Michel Parra, the director of the licensing authority, failed to renew two bars' licences because [translation] "they fail to bring anything to Guadalajara's historic centre" (ibid.). Michel Parra noted that this measure is necessary to "improve the atmosphere" in the district (*La Jornada Jalisco* 18 Feb. 2008). According to the owner of one of the district's discotheques, the pressure exerted by local authorities upon gay businesses to relocate is related to city's hosting of the 2011 Pan American Games (ibid.). Information on whether gay-friendly businesses have in fact relocated could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In March 2008, ANODIS reported that two security guards at the University Health Sciences Centre (Centro Universitario de Ciencias de la Salud, CUCS) in Guadalajara reported a case of a gay couple kissing to their supervisor, who in turn noted that this behaviour was prohibited on CUCS premises (17 Mar. 2008). Further information on this case could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Media

In June 2005, a press release by Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, RSF) reported that the Autonomous University of Guadalajara (Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara) shut down a radio program entitled "Guadalajara Gay Radio" for "political reasons" (13 June 2005). The program's presenter believes that it was suspended because of one person's decision rather than a university-wide policy, since the presenter stated that he had "never [been] censored" by the university (RSF 13 June 2005). Further or corroborating information on the termination of "Guadalajara Gay Radio" could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Advocacy and support groups

In May 2007, *La Jornada Jalisco* reported that the Jalisco state government had refused a proposal to enact legislation that would regulate civil unions, including unions of same-sex partners, as had been previously done by the Federal District (Distrito Federal) (*La Jornada Jalisco* 28 May 2007). Rodrigo Rincón Jiménez, leader of the National Congress on Sexual Diversity (Colegio Nacional de la Diversidad Sexual, Codise), told *La Jornada Jalisco* that Jalisco's governor, Emilio González Márquez, was not [translation] "open" to dialogue with his organization concerning the civil union initiative (ibid.). On another occasion, González Márquez had reportedly stated that free condoms should only be distributed to homosexuals, since he believed that HIV/AIDS was concentrated only in this group (ANODIS 26 Dec. 2007). Rincón Jiménez also stated that the state's cardinal, Juan Sandoval Iñiguez, notably made no public statements condemning the civil union initiative (*La Jornada Jalisco* 28 May 2007).

The Centre for Sexual Diversity (Centro de Diversidad Sexual, Colega) in Guadalajara offers legal and psychological assistance to gay and lesbian youth (UDG 18 June 2007). According to *La gaceta*, 10 percent of those who frequent Colega have worked as prostitutes at some point in their lives (ibid.).

ANODIS reported in April 2008 that a Guadalajara-based collective named Diversiless created a new support group for lesbian and bisexual women in the region, modelled after the Personal Growth Program for Gay and Bisexual Men in Jalisco (Programa de Crecimiento Personal para Hombres Homosexuales y Bisexuales en Jalisco), which has been operated by the Sexual Diversity Group (Grupo Diversidad Sexual) since 1995 (ANODIS 15 Apr. 2008). The Sexual Diversity Group is a Guadalajara-based organization that brings together groups of five to ten people to meet and discuss the societal issues that they face as a result of their sexual orientation (Grupo Diversidad Sexual n.d.). They run separate groups for men and for women (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Agenda LGBT and the Comisión Ciudadana Contra los Crímenes de Odio por Homofobia did not respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH), Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación (CONAPRED), Consulta Mitofsky, *La Crónica de Hoy* [Mexico City], European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, *Guadalajara Colony Reporter*, Human Rights Watch (HRW), *El Informador* [Guadalajara], International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHR), International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), *La Jornada* [Mexico City], *El Occidental* [Guadalajara], *Ocho Columnas* [Guadalajara], Out in Guadalajara, Parametría, United States Department of State, *El Universal* [Mexico City], World News Connection (WNC).

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