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Mexico: The presence of Mara Salvatrucha (MS) and Mara 18 groups, including the cities or municipalities where they are active (2006 - Sept. 2009)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

A special report published in 2008 by the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, CNDH) indicates that the Mara Salvatrucha (MS) and the Mara 18 are present in 24 states of Mexico: Aguascalientes, Baja California, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico, Morelos, Nuevo León, Puebla, Querétaro, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Sonora, Tabasco, Tlaxcala, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tamaulipas, Veracruz and the Federal District (Distrito Federal, DF) (CNDH 2008, 15). According to the conclusions of an earlier report from 2005, Mara members are found mainly in the cities of Frontera Hidalgo, Tuxtla Chico and Unión Juárez (Chiapas), but they are also present in Tenosique (Tabasco) and Othón P. Blanco (Quintana Roo) (*ibid.*, 14). Mara members are reported to travel regularly on trains headed for the United States (US) or Guatemala, passing through the the cities of Tenosique (Tabasco), Tapachula and Tonalá (Chiapas), Medias Aguas, Coatzacoalcos, Tierra Blanca, Córdoba and Orizaba (Veracruz), Apizaco (Tlaxcala), Guadalajara (Jalisco), Mazatlán (Sinaloa), Empalme, Santa Ana and Nogales (Sonora), Mexicali (Baja California), Torreón and Frontera (Coahuila), Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua) and Matamoros (Tamaulipas) (*ibid.*, 15).

More specifically, the regions of los Altos, Northern Chiapas, Costa Grande, Costa Chica de Guerrero, and the central plains of Oaxaca are reportedly considered to be [translation] "potential critical regions" because of the establishment of Mara groups in those areas, while the states of Tamaulipas and Veracruz and the DF are seen as [translation] "critical areas with major potential" (*ibid.*, 15).

According to an article published in 2007 in the daily *El Porvenir*, the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, ITAM) conducted a study on the presence of the MS and the Mara 18 in four Mexican cities: Tapachula (Chiapas), Morelia (Michoacan), Tijuana (Baja California) and the DF (*El Porvenir* 23 Mar. 2007). According to ITAM, Mara groups are found only in Tapachula (Chiapas), and their presence is only temporary because they are just passing through on their way to the US (*ibid.*).

Cited in an article from the agency of the news in the state of Mexico (Notimex), the commander of the 36th military zone (Chiapas) stated that, in 2007, the presence of the MS had decreased along the Mexico-Guatemala border (Notimex 21 Feb. 2007). He also stated that some isolated groups exist in the municipalities of Huixtla and Mapastepec, located in the Soconusco region of Chiapas (*ibid.*).

An article published by the Peruvian agency Informe de Prensa Internacional (IPI) stated that, in 2006, the MS was particularly present in the border towns of northern Mexico, such as Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo, and in the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz, Oaxaca and Quintana Roo (Agencia IPI 11 Dec. 2006). The MS was also reported to have settled in the Iztapalapa and Gustavo A. Madero districts in the DF, as well as in the municipalities of Ecatepec and Netzahualcóyotl in the state of Mexico (*ibid.*).

Cited in an article published by the International Relation and Security Network (ISN), a Mexican security analyst stated that, in 2006, the Mara were present in Chiapas and in other states along the two main migratory routes to the US (ISN 7 Nov. 2006). One runs along the Pacific coast, passing through the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, Michoacán, Sinaloa and Sonora, while the other runs along Mexico's eastern coastline, through the states of Veracruz and Tamaulipas (*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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agencia Informe de Prensa Internacional (IPI) [Lima]. 11 December 2006. Gaston Pardo. "La Mara Salvatrucha, un proyecto delictivo de debilitamiento fronterizo." <<http://www.voltairenet.org/article144051.html>> [Accessed 10 Sept. 2009]

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Representatives of the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal (SSP-DF) and of the Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional (CISEN) could not provide any information within the time constraints for this Response.

Internet sites, including: United States (US) Department of State, Mexico - Procuraduría General de la República (PGR), Mexico - Instituto Nacional de Migración (INAM).

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