

The assassination of the mayoral candidate José Alfredo Cabrera Barrientos is unfortunately just one more case in what represents a common scenario during the electoral processes of not only Mexico but all countries through Latin America and the Caribbean. In the same state of Guerrero, just one day before the reelection, the mayor of Chilpancingo, Alejandro Arcos, was also brutally assassinated and decapitated, his head being found on the roof of his truck, while his body remained inside the vehicle. Both of these deaths contribute to what is now the deadliest election of Mexico, with 37 candidates assassinated, one more than in 2021, alongside 828 non-lethal attacks and 140 cases of threats, attemptings and notified kidnappings, according to the Mexican consultancy Integralia. Data from the Observatório da Violência Política e Eleitoral da Unirio reveal that in Brazil the situation is not that different, with 455 violent cases registered against political leaderships in the country during this year's local elections. Considering that the number is already bigger than from 2020 and the electoral process is not over yet, we still can expect the situation to worsen.

Political violence directly undermines the full exercise of democracy, which relies on fair and free elections as a core element, where voters should be able to express their needs and choose candidates who best represent them, however, with the spread of assassinations and violence it seems that their choices are being limited and the outcome is effectively being decided before the actual election takes place. In Mexico's case, since the 90's, the presence of a lot of different organized crime groups and drug cartels that fight against each other for the control of certain regions, led to a lot of those political assassinations. These killings are often tied to their efforts to secure their interests and needs by supporting candidates who are complicit or passive towards their activities, while eliminating those who oppose them. This seems to have been the motive behind Arcos' assassination, as just days before his killing, he had refused to hand over control of the local police to the criminal group Los Ardillos. The situation in Mexico is even more alarming when considering that nearly 95% of violent killings in the country remain unsolved, with the perpetrators going unpunished, according to reports from México Evalúa.

This dynamic severely undermines democratic processes, exerting significant influence over the political landscape and fostering an environment of fear that limits political competition, also leading to the potential delegitimization of electoral results, both domestically and internationally, as elections may be perceived as unfair, damaging the credibility of the winning candidate. In the long run, the recurrence of such violence erodes public trust in democratic institutions and processes, creating a sense of futility among voters

who may feel that the outcomes are predetermined by force, making their participation seem meaningless.

Through political violence and the targeted homicides of candidates or individuals linked to elections, criminal organizations are able to instill fear in authorities and opponents, operating in a way that mirrors the "tribunais do crime" used by the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) in Brazil, that serve not only as a method of eliminating opposition but also as a powerful display of control and impunity. For the PCC, these "trials" and execution videos, where traitors or rival faction members are brutally punished, are specifically designed to deter future betrayals by showcasing the harsh consequences of defiance. Just as they use these "tribunais" to enforce its authority over local communities—issuing brutal punishments to those who defy their rules—cartels and other criminal groups in Mexico use assassinations to send a clear message: any challenge to their interests will be met with deadly consequences. The strategy behind these killings is to create a climate of fear, where political figures, law enforcement, and even the general public feel powerless to resist the influence of organized crime.

In addition to the murders, criminal organizations frequently record and share videos, turning the violence into a spectacle. These groups started to adapt themselves to the use of various types of technologies, utilizing social media platforms and messaging apps like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram to widely disseminate these videos, sometimes even in uncensored versions. In those, they include really graphic details such as sounds of gunshots and screaming to make it more disturbing for people to watch, in a way that they can maximize the psychological impact of the violence and enhance the effectiveness of the terror they seek to impose.

To address the issues with the cases the Meta exposed, I believe you should adopt an approach that includes stricter content moderation to try limiting the spread of violent propaganda because assassination videos, regardless of the source, should be automatically removed if they depict visible victims in my opinion. If it's from a reputable media outlet that really provides meaningful context and has a public interest value exceptions could be made but always censored and with warnings of sensitive topics. Additionally, Meta should take preemptive steps to prevent these publications from happening in the first place by targeting accounts that share uncensored or sensationalized versions of such content.