

Mexico Detention Profile

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The major source of U.S.-bound migrants, Mexico is also a key destination and transit route for irregular migrants from across the globe, particularly Central America. Under pressure from the United States, Mexico has made considerable efforts since the 1990s to clamp down on third-country nationals transiting the country and has established one of the largest dedicated immigration detention infrastructures in the world. Various organisations, including nongovernmental groups and Mexico's National Human Rights Commission, have alleged numerous violations in detention centres, including extremely poor conditions in some facilities, physical abuse, overpopulation, official corruption, inadequate healthcare, among other problems (La Jornada 2008; Sin Fronteras 2007; Flynn 2005).

Detention policy. The [Mexican Constitution](#), the 1974 *Ley General de Poblacion* (General Law on Population, or LGP), and the 2000 *Reglamento de la Ley General de Poblacion* (RLGP) establish grounds for the detention and/or expulsion of non-citizens.

[Article 33](#) of the Mexican Constitution determines that “the Executive of the Union will have the exclusive authority to require immediate departure from the national territory, without prior judgment, of any foreigner whose presence shall be judged undesirable.”

The LGP outlines legal sanctions unauthorized immigrants face and the grounds for detention. Article 71 authorizes the Secretaria de Gobernación—the Interior Ministry—to establish dedicated immigration detention centres (*estaciones migratorias*) to confine immigrants who have been ordered detained on a provisional basis. Article 118 establishes fines for foreigners who are illegally in Mexico. Article 128 provides that the Interior Ministry can place in administrative detention (*aseguramiento*) all foreigners slated for expulsion from the country.

The Ministry of the Interior coordinates the various migration services, monitoring the entry and departure of nationals and non-nationals, and verifying documentation (LGP 1974, Art. 7). These activities are undertaken by the National Migration Institute (Instituto Nacional de Migración, or INM), an organ of the ministry created in 1993.

Only officials of the INM and the Federal Preventive Police (Policía Federal Preventiva, or PFP) are legally empowered to carry out tasks related to immigration control and supervision of foreign nationals (LGP 1974, Art. 151). However, the LGP also determines that other authorities who by law have federal, local, or municipal forces under their command may provide assistance to the migration authorities when so requested (LGP 1974, Art. 73).

The rights of asylum seekers and refugees are covered in articles 35 and 42 (V and VI) of the LGP and articles 166 and 167 of the RLGP. The RLGP provides for a 15-day deadline to submit the request for asylum (RLGP 2000, Art. 166(I)). The regulations also stipulate that the INM should take the necessary measures to ensure that the applicant remains available until the application is resolved (RLGP 2000, Art. 166(II)). Once a person is recognized as an asylum seeker he/she can receive a temporary permit and should be assigned a place of residence (RLGP 2000, Art. 166 (VI and VIII)).

In certain cases migration or police officials may detain undocumented asylum seekers, who must then apply for asylum with the INM (Human Rights First 2002). After making their application, these asylum seekers often remain in detention (Arias 2008).

The 2001 *Acuerdo por el que se emiten las normas para el funcionamiento de las estaciones migratorias del Instituto Nacional de Migración* (Agreement to Establish Norms for the Functioning of the Migration Centres of the National Migration Institute (Executive Order)) establishes the basic norms and regulations for the functioning of immigration detention centres (*estaciones migratorias*). Article 8 provides that migrants can be held for no longer than 90 days in

administrative detention, although this period can be extended in the following cases: 1) those involving criminal prosecution; 2) when authorities are unable to identify the person; 3) when it is impossible to secure travel and identification documents; 4) when more time is necessary to secure documents from the relevant consulate; 5) when there are no available itineraries for deporting the person; 6) when a third country prohibits the transit of foreigners; 7) in cases involving a legal challenge to the deportation; 8) when the person suffers from specified mental or physical disabilities or disease.

The 2001 *Acuerdo* also provides for rights to a translator (Article 22); rights to assistance in locating family or friends, and to receiving information when applying for refugee status (Article 30); rights to medical assistance (Article 27); and the right to receive visitors (Article 31). Nongovernmental organisations may undertake visits to facilities, but all such visits must be arranged and approved by the site administrator (Articles 31 and 37).

Detention infrastructure. The National Migration Institute (INM) is the government body responsible for the operation of immigration detention centres (*estaciones migratorias*). Operation of the centres is authorized by article 71 of the 1974 *Ley General de Poblacion* (*General Law on Population*).

According to a comprehensive survey of detention sites undertaken by Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) in 2005, the country had 51 permanent detention sites and 68 ad hoc—or *habilitado*—sites, making its migrant detention infrastructure one of the largest in the world (CNDH 2005). A 2008 list published by CNDH showed that permanent centres had decreased to 50 (CNDH 2008). In March 2009, the INM announced that it planned to increase the number of centres to 61 by 2012 (Gandaria 2009).

The majority of Mexico's detention centres are located in the country's southern states, in particular Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Campeche, which together have some 20 centres (CNDH 2008). The city of Tapachula, located near the Guatemalan border, is reportedly home to one of the largest detention centres in the Americas. The facility in Mexico City is notorious for having on any given day a detainee population representing a large swath of the planet. According to one media report, during one day in 2005, Mexico City's *estacion migratoria* "housed some 630 people from nearly 60 countries—about a third of the nations in the world—most of whom had hoped to use Mexico as a gateway to the United States" (Flynn 2005).

A 2007 publication of the Migration Policy Institute reported that as of 2005 some 98 percent of detentions resulted in deportations and that most Central Americans—who make up the vast majority of the detainee population—were deported within days of their apprehension. According to the report, "The length of detention depends on the location of the apprehension, the migrant's nationality, identity documentation, and whether or not there is a pending legal claim, including an asylum application. Central American migrants with identity documents are commonly deported within days, while migrants from countries such as China may remain in detention for three to six months or longer" (Diaz and Kuhner 2007).

Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) as well as several national and international human rights organizations have criticized the country's detention practices. Recent reports detailing the treatment of migrant detainees in Mexico include:

- International Federation for Human Rights, *United States-Mexico Walls, Abuses, and Deaths at the Borders*, March 2008.
- Gabriela Diaz and Gretchen Kuhner, "Women Migrants in Transit and Detention in Mexico," Migration Policy Institute, March 2007.
- Sin Fronteras, *Situación de Los Derechos Humanos de la Población Migrante en las Estaciones Migratorias de la Ciudad de México y de Tapachula, Chiapas 2005-2006*. Sin Fronteras 2007.
- Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, *Informe Especial de la Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos sobre la Situación de los Derechos Humanos en las Estaciones Migratorias y Lugares Habilitados del Instituto Nacional de Migración en la República Mexicana*, Mexico D.F., 2005.

Facts and figures. Immigration authorities deported some 90,000 people in 2008, including 33,000 "expulsions" and 55,000 "voluntary repatriations" (INM 2008). This represented a dramatic decrease from 2005, when nearly 250,000 people were deported (Diaz and Kuhner 2007; Univision 2008).

A 2008 list published by CNDH reported that there were 50 permanent detention centres in operation during that year (CNDH 2008). Central Americans account for over 90 percent of detainees in Mexico, in particular migrants from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Org EM 2009, FIDH 2008, CNDH 2005). Most irregular migrants are detained in southern Mexico, with 48 percent of detentions occurring in Chiapas alone (FIDH 2008). Some 300,000 irregular migrants are estimated to enter Mexican territory every year (EFE 2009).

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Mexico Detention Profile

List of Detention Sites

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Name	Status (Year)	Location	Facility Type	Security	Authority	Management	Capacity	Reported Pop. on a Single Day	Demographics & Segregation
Acapulco Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Acapulco, Guerrero	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Acayucan Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Acayucan, Veracruz	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		Overpopulation (2005)	
Agua Prieta Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Agua Prieta, Sonora	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Aguascalientes Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Cabo San Lucas Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Los Cabos, Baja California Sur	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Campeche Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Campeche, Campeche	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Cancun Estacion Migratoria	In use (2005)	Cancun, Quintana Roo	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Carcel Distrital de San Nicolas de los Garza	In use (2005)	San Nicolas de los Garza, Nuevo Leon	Prison	Secure					No segregation of criminal and administrative detainees (2005)
Chetumal Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Chetumal, Quintana Roo	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Chihuahua Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Chihuahua, Chihuahua	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Ciudad Cuauhtémoc Estacion Migratoria	In use (2005)	Ciudad Cuauhtémoc, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Ciudad del Carmen Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Ciudad Hidalgo Estacion	In use (2005)	Ciudad Hidalgo, Chiapas	Migrant detention	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion /	Instituto Nacional de			

Migratoria			centre		Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Migracion			
Ciudad Juarez Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Comitan Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Comitán de Domínguez, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion / Direccion de Estaciones Migratorias			
Echegaray Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Pijijiapan, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
El Hueyate Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Huixtla, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
El Manguito Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Col. El Sacrificio, Municipio de Tuxtla Chico, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Escarcega Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Escarcega, Campeche	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Estacion Migratoria del Aeropuerto Internacional de la Ciudad de Mexico	In use (2005)	Mexico City (Aeropuerto Internacional de la Ciudad de Mexico, Distrito Federal)	Transit zone - Airport	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Fortin de las Flores Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Fortin de las Flores, Veracruz	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Overpopulation (2005)		No gender segregation; No age segregation (2005)
Frontera Corozal Estacion Migratoria	In use (2005)	Frontera Corozal, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Huehuetan Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Huehuetan, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Iztapalapa Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Mexico City (Iztapalapa, Distrito Federal)	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion	450 (2005)	1000 (2005)	No gender segregation; No age segregation (2005)
Janos Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Janos, Chihuahua	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
La Ventosa Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	La Ventosa, Oaxaca	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		Overpopulation (2005)	
Matamoros Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Matamoros, Tamaulipas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion			
Mazapa de Madero Estacion	In use (2005)	Mazapa de Madero, Chiapas	Migrant detention	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion /	Instituto Nacional de			

Migratoria			centre		Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Migracion
Mazatlan Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Mazatlan, Sinaloa	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Merida Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Merida, Yucatan	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Mexicali Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Mexicali, Baja California	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Miguel Aleman Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Miguel Aleman, Tamaulipas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Morelia Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Morelia, Michoacan	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Nuevo Laredo Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Oaxaca Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Oaxaca, Oaxaca	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Palenque Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Palenque, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Playas de Catazaja Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Playas de Catazaja, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Puebla Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Puebla, Puebla	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Querétaro Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Querétaro, Querétaro	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Reynosa Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Reynosa, Tamaulipas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Salina Cruz Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Salina Cruz, Oaxaca	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
Saltillo Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Saltillo, Coahuila	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion
San Cristobal de las Casas Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion

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San Gregorio Chamic Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Cd. Cuauhtémoc, San Gregorio Chamic Frontera Comalapa, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
San Luis Potosi Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	San Luis Potosi, San Luis Potosi	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
San Pedro Tapanatepec Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	San Pedro Tapanatepec, Oaxaca	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Talisman Estacion Migratoria	In use (2005)	Talisman, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Tampico Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Tampico, Tamaulipas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Tapachula Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Tapachula, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Overpopulation (2005)	No gender segregation; No age segregation (2005)
Tenosique Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Tenosique, Tabasco	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Overpopulation (2005)	
Tijuana Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Tijuana, Baja California	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Tlaxcala Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	San Pablo Apetatitlan, Tlaxcala	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Torreón Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Torreón, Coahuila	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Tuxtla Gutierrez Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Veracruz Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Veracruz, Veracruz	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Overpopulation (2005)	
Villahermosa Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Villahermosa, Tabasco	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Overpopulation (2005)	
Zacatecas Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Zacatecas, Zacatecas	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de Migracion	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		
Zihuatanejo Estacion Migratoria	In use (2008)	Zihuatanejo, Guerrero	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Secretaria de Gobernacion / Instituto Nacional de	Instituto Nacional de Migracion		

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(This is only a partial list. More detailed information is available upon request.)

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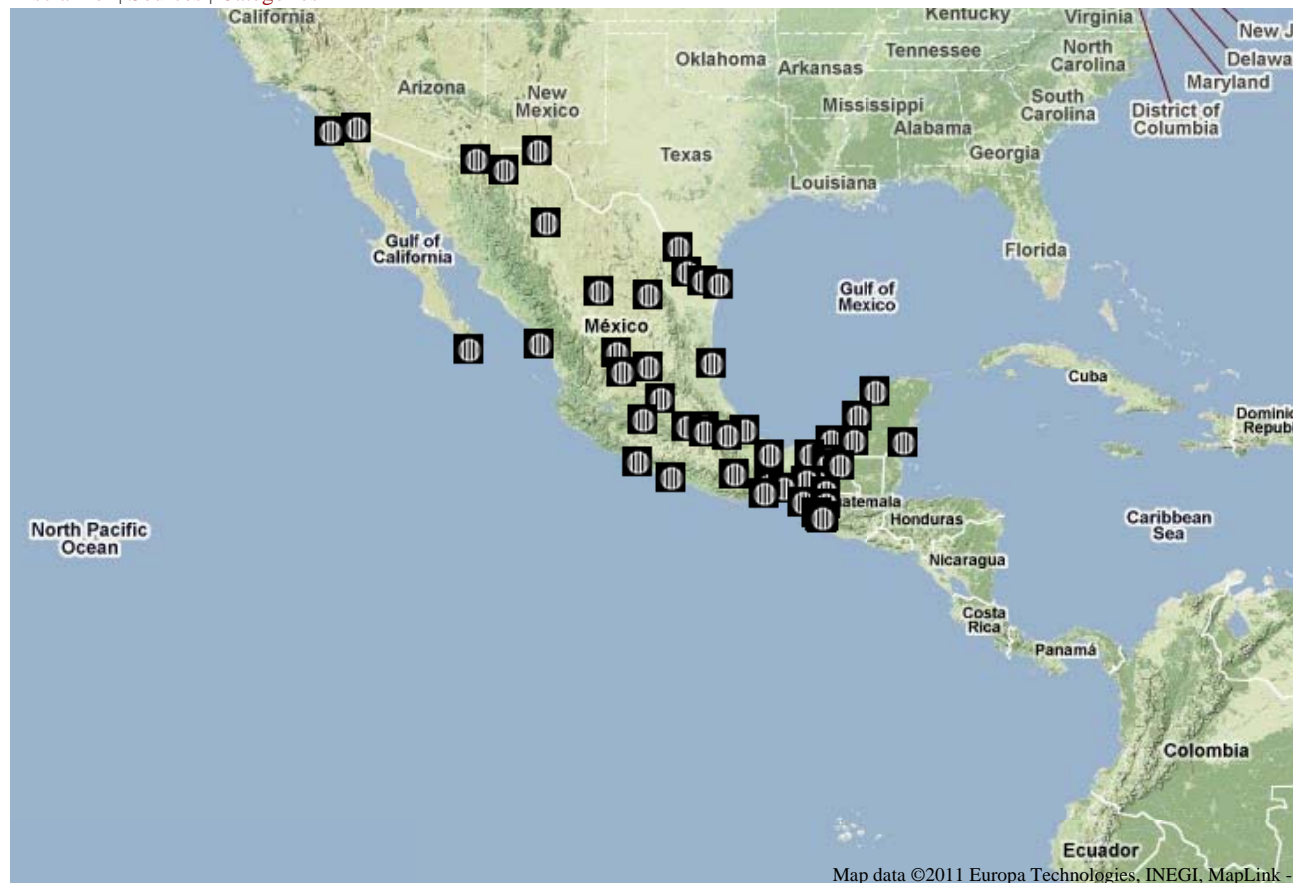
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Mexico Detention Profile

Map of "In Use" Detention Sites

For more detailed information, see the complete [List of Detention Sites](#).

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Country View

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45. Torreon Estacion Migratoria
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50. Zihuatanejo Estacion Migratoria

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