

Mexicans protest for victims of latest mass grave discovery

AFP – Protesters gathered across Mexico on Saturday to demand justice following a grisly discovery of charred bones, shoes and clothing at a suspected drug cartel training ground.

Demonstrations took place in the western state of Jalisco, where the remains were found, and in cities across the country, including the capital Mexico City, Tijuana, Veracruz and San Luis Potosi, according to AFP journalists and local press reports.

Families searching for some of the more than 100,000 people missing in Mexico discovered the bodies on March 5 at a ranch where forced recruits are thought to have been held.

The Guerreros Buscadores collective – a group dedicated to locating missing people – described the site as an “extermination center” with “clandestine crematoriums”, causing shock in a country that has become inured to spiraling cartel-related violence.

In the Mexican capital, demonstrators placed candles and rows of shoes in tribute to the missing.

“I came to speak out for my son and for all the disappeared,” said Aurora Corona, 58, whose son vanished in March last year in Mexico’s northeastern Nuevo Leon state.

She hoped the discovery would pressure authorities to do more to find the 124,059 people officially registered as missing in Mexico, mostly since 2006 when the government declared war on drug cartels.

“Hopefully they’ll pay attention to us now they see the horrors of the country we live in,” she said tearfully.

Since October 2023, groups searching for missing Mexicans have reported the discovery of six more alleged clandestine crematoriums in Jalisco.

Hundreds of graves have been discovered elsewhere in the country.

The United Nations Human Rights Office on Friday described the finding in Jalisco as a “deeply disturbing reminder of the trauma of disappearances linked to organized crime across the country.”

“The discovery is all the more disturbing given that this site had been previously raided as recently as September 2024 by the National Guard and the Jalisco State Prosecutor’s Office, without crucial evidence being detected,” it added.

Juan Carlos Perez, a 22-year-old student demonstrating, hoped the protest would serve as a wake-up call to take action against the rampant criminal violence that has overwhelmed Mexico’s security and justice institutions for two decades.

“My first reaction [to the finding] sadly was ‘ah look, another one’, but then I started following the story and realized that it could have been me, it could have been my dad, my mom,” he said.

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