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Disentangling Unauthorized Immigration and Border Violence
Presidents Obama and Calderon Must Move Beyond Words

Washington, D.C. - Judging from his [remarks](#) today with President Felipe Calderón of Mexico, President Obama understands that the horrific violence which currently afflicts our southern neighbor is a complex problem that requires a multi-faceted solution. President Obama reaffirmed his administration's commitment "to stem the southbound flow of American guns and money" which fuel the lion's share of Mexico's violence, as well as to develop "new approaches to reducing the demand for drugs in our country." The President also pledged to keep up law-enforcement pressure on the criminal gangs that "traffic in drugs, guns, and people."

A notable aspect of the President's remarks is that his discussion of violence in Mexico was **separate and distinct** from his discussion of comprehensive immigration reform and the need to create a pathway to legal status for unauthorized immigrants already living in the United States. The distinction reflects the fact that unauthorized immigrants are not the cause of the violence which plagues so many communities in Mexico. This distinction stands in marked contrast to the supporters of "get tough" anti-immigrant laws, such as Arizona's SB 1070, who frequently cite scattered episodes of violence spilling over the border from Mexico as a justification for their legislation. But cracking down on unauthorized immigrants in the United States is not going to diminish violence in border communities because unauthorized immigrants aren't the perpetrators, criminal cartels are.

In fact, unauthorized immigrants tend to be the victims of violence at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers who all too often hold them hostage in "safe houses" in Phoenix and other border cities until they pay whatever amount of money the smugglers demand. Ending this sort of violence involves not only cracking down on the human smugglers who inflict it, but drying up the flow of unauthorized immigrants by creating sufficient avenues for legal immigration that accommodate actual demand.

"Our inaction on immigration allows criminals to profit and prosper at the border. The best way to get these criminal enterprises out of the business of illegal immigration is for the U.S. Government to get back in the business of legal immigration" said Benjamin Johnson, Executive Director of the American Immigration Council.

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