

## STATEMENT REGARDING SECURITY CONCERNS IN MEXICO

Witness for Peace (WFP) and the Casa de los Amigos place the highest priority on the health, safety, and security of all participants in our travel programs in Mexico.

**Like all people and organizations in Mexico, we are concerned about the widely-reported increase in violence in Mexico in the northern border regions. We take these developments very seriously.** News stories that focus on the drug war and the border regions can make it difficult to form a clear picture of what daily life in the rest of Mexico is like right now. There is an armed conflict over control of smuggling and trade routes between drug cartels and also a sustained conflict between those cartels and Mexican security forces. We encourage everyone traveling to Mexico or anywhere else at any time to take all the appropriate safety measures that you would take in any large city.

**However, many of the claims and implicit impressions left by U.S. news sources including reports in the New York Times, the Associated Press and other print and TV news media that describe nation-wide indiscriminate violence and a general breakdown of society are inaccurate.** While we object to the use of violence by any group and take offense at all loss of life, it is critical to point out that the drug war-related assassinations that are gripping Mexico are largely taking place in U.S.-Mexico border regions, and have not been indiscriminate. **The violence has not affected daily life in other regions of Mexico.** By now many of you have read the February 20<sup>th</sup> U.S. State Department warning on traveling to Mexico and have read and watched newspaper and TV articles about the increase in violence in Mexico. Travel warnings advising against over-land travel through the U.S.-Mexico border region are much more accurate and reasonable than general warnings against travel to all points in Mexico.

**We also believe that it is now more important than ever to bring university, educational, fact-finding and solidarity delegations to parts of Mexico not directly affected by the violence.** When widespread media reports are delivering grim news from Mexico every day and the general stability of Mexico is a hot topic on the floor of the U.S Congress, it is as important as ever for U.S. citizens to come to Mexico and meet face to face with Mexican people and organizations. This kind of direct encounter is the basis for real international understanding and friendship, and remains the best antidote to counter generalized and sensational news reports, stereotypes and misinformation about Mexico.

Nothing is more important to us than the safety and well-being of our delegations, student groups, and guests, and we will continue to keep you informed about our view of the current security situation in Mexico.

Casa de los Amigos, Mexico City

Witness for Peace Mexico Program, Oaxaca, Mexico