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LIFESTYLE

Mexico Decriminalizes Minor Drug Possession

by Mariela Rosario | 08.24.2009 | 5:00pm | 0 Comments



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Last week, Mexico officially enacted a law decriminalizing possession of small amounts of drugs such as marijuana, cocaine and heroin. Instead of facing criminal prosecution, addicts found with drugs for "personal and immediate use" will be sent to treatment clinics and treated as patients and not felons.

Since 2006, more than 11,000 people have died in the bloody war being fought between the army and drug cartels. The law was passed with little fanfare by politicians grimly aware that the escalating violence associated with President Felipe Calderón's war on drugs had made such a drastic step viable. Mexico seemed primed to take a step in this directions. Back in April, the congress was considering altogether legalizing marijuana, but it was a step that Calderón vehemently opposed.

"This is not legalization," Bernardo Espino del Castillo of the attorney general's office told the Associated Press. "This is regulating the issue." Officials argue that revising the drug laws will help to focus the drug war on big-time traffickers instead of petty users.

"The decision by the Mexican government to decriminalize the consumption of small amounts of drugs constitutes a step in the right direction after decades of failed policy," Juan Carlos Hidalgo, the Cato Institute's project coordinator for Latin America, told *The New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/24/world/americas/24mexico.html?pagewanted=1&ref=americas>). "It is in line with efforts by other Latin American leaders and governments who are increasingly skeptical of Washington's prohibitionist drug policies."

Tell us: Do you think legalizing possession of drugs for personal use will help Mexico fight the escalating war on drug trafficking?

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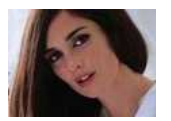
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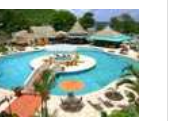
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