

Prison Ministry Opens Campus in Violent Juarez

✖ Crossroad Bible Institute just opened CBI Mexico North, its 13th international satellite campus. Based in Ciudad Juárez, CBI México North offers the promise of peace in Christ to people incarcerated in a city dominated by violence, warfare and chaos.

In 2007, prior to the turf war between the Juárez and Sinaloa drug cartels that began the following year, Juárez saw 300 homicides. That number shot to 3,000 by 2010, according to CBI.

As of early 2011, the city averaged eight homicides a day. Although the death toll lessened slightly this spring, it remains shockingly high as corruption runs rampant and the drug cartels fight for control of smuggling routes.

Not surprisingly, violence permeates the prison environment as well. But CBI's new satellite campus, led by Emmanuel Sandoval Ramos, offers a hope-filled alternative.

Ramos became familiar with Crossroad through his studies at All Nations Seminary. Students at the seminary serve as CBI Instructors, an effort facilitated by Jeananne and Dan Kuiper, missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions, through CBI's Seminarian Program. The seminarians' efforts will now be channeled through CBI Mexico North.

The first CBI students are incarcerated in CERESO Prison in Juárez. Most are part of a vibrant prison church that meets within the facility, and they use what they learn through the Crossroad program to disciple others within their congregation. Many have directed family members on the outside to Ramos' church, which has received them with open arms.

No program comparable to that of CBI exists in the prisons and jails of Mexico, and instructors, students and even prison officials have welcomed it enthusiastically. Ramos explains, "The leaders of CERESO Prison see the materials as being very good and useful. We know the blessing this discipleship will bring to the city."