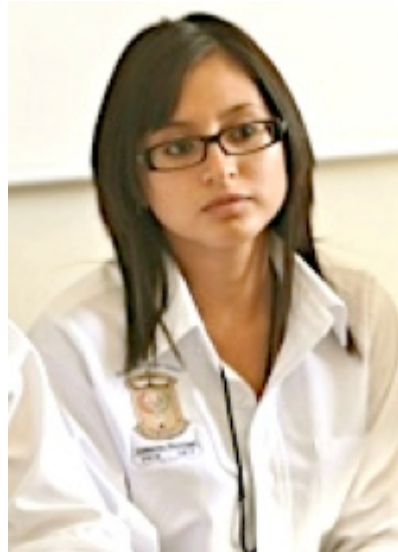




Written by [James Heiser](#) on March 10, 2011

Mexican Police Chief Seeks Asylum in U.S.

As violence continues to spread south of the U.S.-Mexican border, one of those who had been charged with the responsibility of enforcing the law has been forced to flee the rising tide of lawlessness in her community and her nation. Marisol Valles García, the police chief of Praxedis G. Guerrero, is the latest official to flee Mexico, and is now seeking asylum in the United States.



According to an [article](#) for the *El Paso Times*, the 21-year-old police chief and several members of her immediate family have been released from the El Paso detention center and have moved farther north from the border. The town where Garcia served as police chief was small; Praxedis G. Guerrero has a population of only 4,700. Nevertheless, although the violence in large cities — and [Ciudad Juarez](#), in particular — has attracted some attention in U.S. media outlets, many small communities have also become virtual war zones, without drawing much attention north of the border.

The Associated Press [reports](#) that Garcia had good reason to give serious consideration to the death threats which were being made against her: Her predecessor was shot to death in July 2009. According to the AP, the small town where Garcia served is a microcosm of the horrors of the current drug war in Mexico:

Drug violence has transformed the township from a string of quiet farming communities into a lawless no-man's-land only about a mile from the Texas border. Between 1995 and 2005, it had a steady population of about 8,500 inhabitants. Five years later, slightly more than 4,500 people live there. Two rival gangs — the Juarez and Sinaloa drug cartels — are battling over control of its single highway, a lucrative drug-trafficking route along the Texas border.

After Garcia received death threats — and may have been the target of at least one attempted kidnapping — she was given a five-day leave of absence beginning March 2 to travel to the U.S. to tend to “personal matters.” She never returned. Instead, the now-former police chief has made a formal application for asylum in the United States.

The *El Paso Times* story quotes an unnamed official with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who said that Garcia's case will receive an immigration hearing: “Marisol Valles García is in the United States, and she will have the opportunity to present the facts of her case before an impartial immigration judge.” Time will tell whether her flight north of the border will protect her from the



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vendetta of the Mexican cartels. There is an irony to the fact that because García is seeking to obey U.S. immigration laws, there remains an element of doubt regarding the outcome of her application; if she had simply, and illegally, slipped across the border as millions of others have done, she would likely have escaped detection by federal authorities.

Photo: Marisol Valles Garcia during a news conference after her swearing-in ceremony as the new police chief in the border town of Praxedis G.

Guerrero: AP Images



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