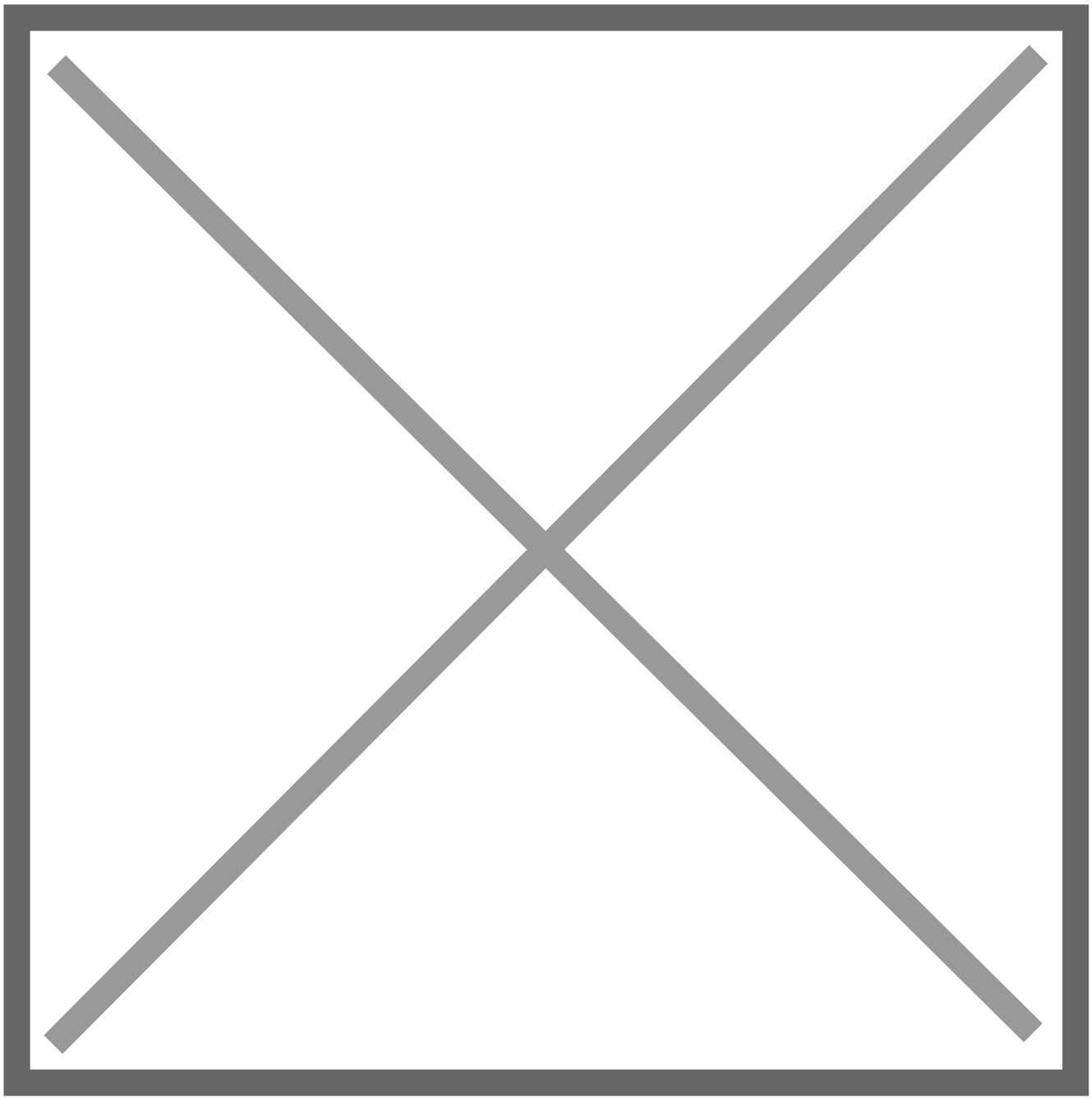
News



Demonstrators march in favor of the decriminalization of cannabis in Mexico City July 3, 2021. (CNS photo/Luis Cortes, Reuters)



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Mexico's bishops have expressed dismay with a Supreme Court decision to declare "unconstitutional" laws prohibiting the use of recreational marijuana.

In a statement, "Be ready," signed by Archbishop Domingo Díaz Martínez of Tulancingo, health commission president -- the bishops said: "We see with great sorrow and concern the possible complications that indiscriminate abuse of (marijuana) will bring: depression, increased anxiety, increased suicide rate, memory loss, social disintegration and, most seriously, the destruction of the family."

It continued, "Those of us who live with the people foresee with this decision more poverty, more family problems, more violence, more pain and more impunity."

The statement also urged parents, young people, catechists and youth pastors to "work to sow the values of the kingdom in the new generations so as not to have regrets later."

In an 8-3 ruling June 28, Mexico's Supreme Court struck down parts of the general health law pertaining to marijuana so that individuals could grow and consume cannabis recreationally. Previously, individuals could win court injunctions so they could do so, but now the health secretariat will issue permits for such purposes.

The buying and selling of marijuana remains prohibited. The court has ordered Congress to create a legal framework for cannabis -- but lawmakers have asked for multiple extensions.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has expressed his discomfort with decriminalized marijuana -- calling its commercialization "immoral" -- and saying June 29: "If we see that instead of helping, it hurts, then we propose a change. I would send, in accordance with my powers, an initiative of law."

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Drug cartel violence has consumed Mexico over the past 15 years as criminal groups battle over smuggling routes and control of territories. Some in the church express doubts that decriminalizing marijuana will diminish drug cartel violence.

Bishop Salvador Rangel of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, whose diocese includes impoverished communities with long histories of growing illegal crops, says the prices for marijuana and opium poppies crashed in recent years due to the legalization of marijuana in some U.S. states and synthetic drugs such as fentanyl replacing heroin.

The cartels are purchasing less of the crops, he said, causing hardship for poor farmers.

"The business now for drug cartels is extorting mines that we have in Guerrero (state) and extorting budgets of municipal governments," said Rangel, who expressed support for the church's stance against marijuana decriminalization.