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Mexico prez: cartels show no 'limits or scruples' (4:26 a.m.)

By E. Eduardo Castillo / The Associated Press

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MEXICO CITY-President Felipe Calderon said Monday that Mexico is facing a new stage in its war with drug cartels as gangs escalate their attacks on the government and civilians, including journalists.

Speaking at a meeting with representatives of business and civic groups, Calderon said organized crime groups have demonstrated they have no "limits or moral scruples" and are trying to instill fear in officials and civilians alike.

"We face a new stage in insecurity," he said, noting this year's assassination of a gubernatorial candidate in a border state and the recent kidnappings of journalists. "We have witnessed an escalation of violent crime in our country."

Calderon acknowledged there is criticism of how the government has pursued the crackdown on drug cartels that he ordered upon taking office in December 2006, and he called on citizens to make suggestions for altering and improving its strategy.

"My government has been and will be willing to revise it, to strengthen it, to refine it," he said.

Ernesto Lopez Portillo, director of the Institute for Security and Democracy, complained to the president that the results of the crackdown don't seem consistent with all the resources poured into fighting crime.

"We are at the stage of having more resources and not having better results," he said.

Despite successes such as last week's killing by soldiers of Ignacio "Nacho" Coronel, one of the top leaders of Sinaloa cartel, many Mexicans are growing

worried over the violence tied to the drug trade. Nearly 25,000 people have been killed in drug-related violence since Calderon became president, many of them in fighting among the cartels.

On Saturday, police in northern Mexico rescued two kidnapped television news cameramen whose abductors had demanded their media outlets broadcast cartel messages. Two other journalists abducted at the same time as the cameramen were released in the week.

Public Safety Secretary Genaro Garcia Luna blamed the abductions of the journalists on the Sinaloa drug cartel run by Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, Mexico's most-wanted drug lord.

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