

Nation's Murder count on pace to set new record

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The homicide count in The Bahamas is on pace to nearly triple where it was two decades ago, far outpacing the rate of population growth over the same period.

As of June 28, there were 47 homicides in The Bahamas in 2010. This puts The Bahamas on pace to near 100 homicides for the year. The Bahamas set homicide records in both 2007 and 2009. The current homicide record from last year is 87.

The current homicide count puts the country on pace to record its third homicide record in four years.

As recently as 1991, the homicide count in The Bahamas was as low as 28, according to police records.

The county's population only grew by 19 percent from 1990 to 2000. Department of Statistics projections set population growth between 2000 and 2010 at around 14 percent.

The international homicide standard countries seek to be at or under is five murders per 100,000 persons. Ideally, The Bahamas would have around 18 homicides per year if it was near this mark.

The projected population count for The Bahamas this year by the Department of Statistics is 346,900. The 2010 census is underway.

If the homicide rate continues on the same pace in the second half of 2010, The Bahamas would have a homicide rate of around 27.17 per 100,000.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2008 the homicide rate per 100,000 in Canada was 1.83; the U.S. rate was 5.2 per 100,000 persons.

The Bahamas is moving towards a homicide rate comparable with countries in the region that have serious crime problems.

In 2008 the homicide rate for Jamaica was 59.5 per 100,000; it was 39.7 per 100,000 persons the same year in Trinidad and Tobago, according to the UNODC.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force study Homicide in The Bahamas 1991-2003 cites arguments and fights as the leading motive (26 percent) for homicides over the study period.

Homicides committed as a result of robbery or armed robbery came in second (22 percent); the third leading motive was listed as domestic, which included intimate partner relationships.

Since the study it is unclear if drug-related killings and witness killings have increased in prevalence to be listed within the top three motives for homicides in the country.

In the UNODC World Drug Report 2010, released last week, the organization warned transshipment countries about the corrosive effects of instability and organized crime as a result of drug trafficking.

The report noted that governments in countries with small economies "may have trouble asserting authority over their sovereign territory" as a result of this threat. The report also noted that "prolonged instability can also keep economies from growing."

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