

Thousands Protest Disappearance of Mexican Teaching Students

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Mass protest action continued Friday over the disappearance of 43 teaching students (normalistas) from Ayotzinapa in the Mexican state of Guerrero. A march of over ten thousand teachers and sympathizers took place in the afternoon along the hotel beach zone in the Guerrero Pacific coast resort of Acapulco.

Marchers chanted, "Ayotzinapa is all Mexico." They demanded that authorities produce the missing students, alive. They also demanded that Guerrero's governor, Ángel Aguirre, leave office.

Undaunted, Governor Aguirre ordered a massive state police presence to contain the Acapulco demonstration. Police reportedly worked with so-called narco taxi drivers to keep the marchers from entering certain zones.

On Thursday protesters in Guerrero state occupied five city halls, including the municipal headquarters of Chilpancingo, Guerrero's capital. They vowed to take all 81 town halls in Guerrero unless the students were returned.

The 43 *normalistas* disappeared after police in the city of Iguala opened fire on protesting Ayotzinapa students September 26, killing six people and wounding 16 other students.

Last week Guerrero state prosecutor Iñaky Blanco said that two members of the Guerrero Unidos gang had confessed to killing 17 of the missing students and burying them. The gang members said that the order to kidnap the students came from Iguala's police chief, who has since disappeared along with its mayor, José Luis Abarca.

Twenty-eight burned bodies were recovered from mass graves on the outskirts of Iguala. This week federal investigators said the bodies were not those of the missing students because their DNA did not match them. However, 26 mass graves have been located in the area so far, making processing all of them a laborious task.

The status of the missing students remains shrouded in mystery, and outrage in Mexico is widespread.

Abarca's brothers-in-law had been lieutenants in the notorious Beltrán Leyva drug cartel, and another brother-in-law is a member of Guerrero Unidos. No sooner were Albarca's ties to drug gangs made public last week than Albarca's mother-in-law said in an interview that the Beltrán Leyvas had financed Aguirre's campaign for governor.

Both Albarca and Aguirre are members of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). They are in the dominant faction in the PRD called the Chuchos, which signed on to President Peña Nieto's "Pact for Mexico," including attacks on teachers and workers and the opening up of the Mexican economy and oil industry to foreign capital.

Facing massive disaffection, on Thursday the head of the PRD was forced to call for Aguirre to resign. The Guerrero state Congress on Thursday formally removed the fugitive Abarca from his mayoral post. Aguirre then replaced Abarca with his deputy, Luis Mazón. Aguirre at the same time removed Mazon's brother, Lázaro Mazón, as secretary of health of Guerrero state because he had been the principal promoter of Abarca's political career.

Authorities reported finding a blanket in Iguala Wednesday with a message from the head of Guerrero Unidos directed to President Peña Nieto. It claimed that the brothers of Mario Casarrubias Salgado, the founder of the gang, and a gang called Los Peques (the Kids), were responsible for the massacre and disappearance of the *normalistas*. It also reportedly said that eight mayors in the northern part of Guerrero state, including in major cities such as Taxco and Ixtapan de la Sal, as well as a high state official, had close ties with the gang.

Peña Nieto's government has long known of Abarca's ties to drug gangs. Peña Nieto's attorney general and interior minister last year were provided with credible testimony that Abarca had such links and had killed political rivals. They did nothing.

In a poll taken in Guerrero published in the newspaper *Reforma* this week, half of those polled anticipated that those responsible for the disappearance of the *normalistas* would escape with impunity, while only 37 percent predicted that they would be punished. Sixty-three percent of those polled were in favor of the protests and marches demanding justice for the disappeared students, and 65 percent said they disapproved of Governor Aguirre's handling of the matter.

The savage attack on the Ayotzinapa *normalistas* comes only a few months after what now appears to have been the summary execution of 22 youths by a special army brigade in Tlatlaya in the nearby state of Mexico. The Secretary of National Defense has does his best to likewise shroud the facts of that incident from public scrutiny.

The Iguala and Tlalaya massacres hold a mirror to the character of Mexican capitalism and the state that stands atop it. They reveal the real and explosive state of affairs: mass violence against the population, political manipulation of the law if not its complete absence, corruption, the collusion of organized crime with the authorities, and the complicity of the civil government and the armed forces in all of the above.

In the final analysis, the terrorism of the state is meant to crush any resistance of the Mexican working class to a political and socioeconomic regime that benefits only Mexican oligarchs and foreign capital.

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