

The Obama administration and disappeared Mexican students

Marc Wells

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The disappearance and likely murder of 43 teaching students or *normalistas* in Mexico has engulfed the government of President Enrique Peña Nieto and the entire Mexican ruling establishment in a major political crisis.

Not only is the ruling PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) implicated in heinous crimes, but the right-wing opposition PAN (National Action Party) and the supposedly left PRD (Revolutionary Democratic Party) are as well.

The bloody events that unfolded in the town of Iguala in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero are the product of a deepening social crisis characterized by poverty, intense social inequality and continuous criminal violence on the part of the government.

The responsibility for violence and criminality, however, doesn't rest solely with the Mexican ruling class. The current and previous occupants of the White House also have blood on their hands because of the role played by Washington in support of the global operations of American capitalism.

Mexican society is rife with poverty. Among the countries comprising the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Mexico has the second highest degree of economic inequality after Chile, despite having the second largest economy in Latin America.

The top 10 percent controls 36 percent of Mexico's resources, while the bottom 10 percent controls only 1.36 percent, more than three times the OECD average inequality. More than half of the population—52.3 percent—lives in poverty (World Bank, 2012). The infant mortality rate is three times that of the US and more than seven times that of Japan.

Mexico's crime rate reached 22,732 homicides in 2013. It is a well-documented fact that criminal gangs

and cartels operate in a *Pax Mafiosa* collusion with police authorities and politicians. This modus operandi was on display in Iguala, where mayor Jose Luis Abarca (PRD) is alleged to have instructed his police force to arrest the 43 *normalistas* and turn them over to *Guerreros Unidos*, an infamous drug cartel believed responsible for their deaths.

The massacre has received a noticeably muted response within US ruling circles. Asked about the Obama administration's attitude toward the killings, State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf this week boasted about how administration officials "work very closely with Mexican authorities on a range of security-related issues," while praising the Peña Nieto government's handling of the affair.

Harf noted that the Obama administration had certified to Congress the Mexican government's compliance with human rights standards required for military aid on September 19—one week before the Iguala massacre—and had no intention of "revisiting" the issue.

The reasons are obvious. Peña Nieto's historic privatization of national oil company Petróleos Mexicano (PEMEX), which opened the floodgates to international speculation, and a slew of similar "reforms" affecting telecommunications, education and banking have been greeted with enthusiasm by Washington and Wall Street.

During a visit to Mexico last year, Obama declared: "I want to commend President Peña Nieto and the Mexican people for the ambitious reforms that you've embarked on to make your economy more competitive, to make your institutions more effective... But let me repeat what I told the President—as Mexico works to become more competitive, you've got a strong partner in the United States, because our success is shared."

The partnership to which Obama refers amounts to over a century and a half of US domination and exploitation of Mexico, from the control of its railroad and mining industry since the second half of the 19th century to the infamous 1994 NAFTA agreement, which transformed Mexico into a giant cheap labor sweatshop for the principal benefit of US capital.

President Obama has been a consistent supporter of Peña Nieto from the moment the controversial 2012 Mexican election results were made public. They share common views on democratic and human rights.

While Nieto announced the further militarization of his country and increased central powers, Obama green lighted the continued implementation of a police state: tanks, automatic weapons and a no-fly zone are the new reality in Ferguson, Missouri, blessed by Washington. Both presidents are responding to social inequality by increasing repression at home and war abroad.

Two events further elucidate this process: the massacre of 22 youths last June in Tlatlaya by the Mexican military—which it still denies despite evidence substantiated in an AP investigation—and the arrest last month of 11 protesters in Mexico City for terrorism, treason and organized crime.

The “war on drugs,” is a pretext used on both sides of the border for a common reason: like the “war on terror,” it allows the massive deployment of police and military personnel for enforcing corrupt, criminal rule (Mexico) and regional hegemony (US). The result has been 60,000 deaths between 2006 and 2012 alone.

Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has documented the military’s use of torture, arbitrary detentions, beatings and electrical shocks against innocent citizens with no connection to the drug trade.

During Obama’s presidency alone, Mexico has invested over \$68 billion in security, while the US Mérida initiative, a bipartisan “antidrug-anticrime” initiative aimed specifically at the drug war in Mexico and Central America, reinforced US military aid and influence to the tune of \$2.4 billion.

Under the guise of this initiative, and flouting Mexican sovereignty and international law, the US regularly empowers itself to fly drones over Mexico as well as take lives, if deemed necessary.

One of the most direct expressions of Obama’s responsibility for Mexico’s record of violence and

abject social conditions is his immigration policy. Obama will be remembered by millions of Mexicans for his record number of deportations. Last year alone, of the 438,421 deportees, 314,904 were Mexican.

Moreover, Obama’s recent executive order on immigration creates the framework for the criminalization of undocumented immigrants, while continuing deportations and imposing high application fees, difficult documentation requirements and long waiting periods for approval that discourage participation.

The events in Mexico are not an aberration. They attest to the destructive contradictions of world capitalism, with profit as the true motive behind national policies of and the criminal role played by every ruling elite. Mexican workers will find no partner in any of the institutional figures. But north of the Rio Grande US workers face similar conditions. Unity on the basis of a socialist program is a historical necessity and the first step in the pursuit of the United Socialist States of the Americas.



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