

Mexican elections held under conditions of police-military siege

Rafael Azul
9 June 2015

Sunday's midterm elections in Mexico represent a new stage in Mexico's social crisis.

Election Day featured a massive police-military operation in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Michoacán in western México. Troops and federal and state police were also mobilized in Chiapas, Veracruz, Mexico City and Guadalajara.

The voting for seats in the lower house of Congress, governorships and the administration of Mexico City was characterized by government violence and protests. While the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI) of President Enrique Peña Nieto and its coalition partners appears to have retained a slim majority in Congress, the elections—including low voter turnouts—underscored the depth of popular opposition to the entire state apparatus.

In Guerrero State, the repression of teachers began on June 5 in Chilpancingo and Tlapa. The police and paramilitary violence continued through the weekend across the state, which was under effective military occupation. On Friday in Tlapa, paramilitary squads, shielded by the police, attacked teachers as many of them made their way to work.

The resort city of Acapulco was placed under military occupation by Mexican Marines. In Tlixia and other Guerrero cities, relatives and supporters of the disappeared 43 *normalista* teaching students from Iguala fought to prevent voting from taking place, confiscating ballots coming into the city and setting ballot boxes on fire in the town square.

On election night, hundreds of federal police and army troops entered Tlapa to rescue 30 of their own being held by Tlapa citizens as hostages in a church to be exchanged for arrested demonstrators. In the ensuing struggle, the repressors murdered a student, Antonio

Vivar Candi. Four others were wounded, as the troops arbitrarily entered homes and made further arrests.

In Oaxaca State, the repression began on Saturday in the Coastal Region, with the arrival of federal police forces flown into San Pedro Pochutla and Tlaxiaco.

In the city of Oaxaca itself, seven planes full of federal police and army troops arrived Saturday, supposedly to guarantee the “electoral process.” As the troops prepared to land, police took over Oaxaca airport and blocked access to the area surrounding the airport to members of the National Committee of Education Workers (Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación, CNTE). The dissident union had actively campaigned for the repudiation of the electoral process in light of the attacks on public education, the disappearance of the 43 teaching students in Iguala and the enormous corruption that prevails in Guerrero, Oaxaca and across México.

Oaxaca was patrolled by a beefed-up police force that included three thousand state police officers. Eighty-eight teachers belonging to the CNTE were beaten and arrested.

On Sunday, every district capital in the state was placed under military-police control. In one of these municipalities, Huajuapán de León, police allegedly searching for bombs expelled residents from their homes.

In response, several thousand teachers marched Sunday to denounce the state of siege and the elections.

Oaxaca Governor Gabino Cué described Friday and Saturday's repression and military occupation as a “process of restoration.” He claimed that Sunday's voting was normal for most of the state. Cué did point out that rates of abstention in Oaxaca had been higher than in recent years, however. He blamed this not on the troops or on the anger over the disappearance of the

normalistas, but on fear of intimidation from the protesters.

None of this prevented Héctor Astullido of the ruling PRI from declaring victory in Guerrero. The PRI also claimed to be leading in Chilpancingo and Acapulco.

The Peña Nieto administration attempted to paint a brighter picture of voting in other parts of the country. However, across Mexico the voting was characterized by high rates of abstention. In Mexico State, fifty percent did not vote. In the Pacific Coast city of Cancún a rate of abstention of eighty percent was reported. Other states also reported high rates of abstention, including Puebla, Chiapas and Veracruz.

The PRI also claimed victory in the state of Michoacán, north of Oaxaca, previously governed by the Party of the Democratic Revolution (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, PRD). Michoacán is another state characterized by popular discontent. Like Guerrero and Iguala, Michoacán has been the scene of gang war activity. Hundreds of clandestine graves have been found over the past two years.

On May 13 Enrique Saucedo, a candidate of the Movement of National Regeneration (*Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional*, Morena) was assassinated, part of a string of candidates killed in the weeks leading up to the June 7 elections. In protest over the killing, Saucedo was nevertheless elected on June 7.

On May 23, the police in Tanhuato, Michoacán killed 43 people. The official version is that those killed were engaged in a shootout with the police. There is a widespread suspicion that the 43 were massacred in cold blood.

None of the six candidates for Michoacán governor addressed the Tanhuato killings.

The militarization of the elections was not limited to the above states. Troops and militarized police were also sent into Chiapas, Veracruz, the State of Mexico, Mexico City and Guadalajara.

Events in Michoacán and elsewhere during the week leading up to the elections indicate that police death squads are being organized. On June 5, masked individuals with police-style vests attacked eight Veracruz University students inside a home. The students were beaten with sticks, machetes and rifle butts, according to the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Prodh). “They suffered wounds throughout their bodies, including loss of teeth,”

according to Prodh.

While the official vote count is not in yet, preliminary figures indicate that the three leading parties all received lower percentages of the vote than in the presidential elections of 2012. The PRI received 30 percent of the vote, followed by the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) and the PRD. Morena’s share of the vote increased to about nine percent, and the party won several districts in Mexico City from the PRD.

While Morena (formed by former PRD leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador) is a thoroughly bourgeois party, the increase in its vote is an indication of widespread hostility to the main parties of the Mexican ruling class. Another indication was the victory of independent candidate Jaime Rodríguez, formerly of the PRI, in the northern state of Nuevo León.

The militarization of Sunday’s vote and the accompanying repression must be seen as a warning to the Mexican working class of what is in store in this next period. The Mexican ruling elite will stop at nothing to defend its wealth and privileges. Workers and youth must fight back by rejecting any of the bourgeois alternatives to the PRI and building a revolutionary socialist party that will defend their interests as part of a broader international struggle of North, Central and South American workers.



To contact the WSWP and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wswp.org/contact