

Mexico's national teachers strike enters second month

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The nationwide strike called on May 15 by the National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE) in opposition to Mexico's 2012 regressive federal education law continues, along with protests and other militant actions. These are being met with increased repressions and threats by the government.

On Monday the CNTE announced routes for protest marches in Mexico City and said that it would block certain transit routes there and in other parts of the country. In response, the head of the National Security Commission, Renato Sales Heredia, warned that force would be used to keep roadways open to traffic.

In defiance of this threat teachers marched in 22 municipalities in Michoacán state on Wednesday, and blocked access to the commercial center of the Michoacan capital, Morelia.

As part of the strike thousands of teachers have set up encampments in central locations in major cities in the poor southern states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas and Michoacán, which have long histories of militant teacher action. Sales Heredia also threatened today to use force to break up any "unauthorized" encampments.

Teachers vow to continue with work stoppages until federal officials sit down with them at the negotiating table without any preconditions and hear their demands, including salary increases and changes to the new national teacher evaluation process.

The federal Secretary of Public Education, Aurelio Nuño Mayer, has taken a hard line across the board with the teachers. He has insisted that dialogue with teachers will only occur if they first return to classes and "respect the Constitution," that is, that the education reform implemented by the ruling class is the binding law of the land. In other words, the federal government insists that teachers adhere to and not

challenge any aspect of a law that subordinates education to the profit needs of big business, seeks to privatize education, and singles out and slanders educators for the supposed failures of the public education system.

Nuño Mayer on Monday warned that administrative proceedings to deregister—that is, effectively fire—4,300 teachers who have missed at least four days of classes, and to deduct the pay of others who missed work to join protests, were already in process and would formally commence in two weeks. This is meant to cow the teachers into ending their work stoppage.

Nuño Mayer has also claimed that his office has evidence of "widespread illegal, outrageous and improper pressure" to keep teachers from showing up at schools and parents from bringing their children to schools, particularly in Michoacán, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas. He threatened criminal action in response. This is a thinly veiled call to authorities to ramp up repression.

It should be apparent by now that the CNTE's call for a dialogue with the federal government and Nuño Mayer is a pipe dream.

On Tuesday, contingents of telephone workers and professors from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the largest university in Latin America, who belong to the National Union of Workers, joined CNTE members in marching in the capital city.

At a press conference after the march, these protesters and CNTE leaders in Chiapas and Guerrero denounced the jailing of Rubén Núñez and Francisco Villalobos, leaders of section 22 of the National Union of Education Teachers in Oaxaca (SNTE), a dissident faction of the SNTE controlled by the CNTE. They called the SNTE leaders political prisoners, and said their arrest was part of a strategy on the part of the

federal government to wear the teachers down in order to force an end to their resistance.

Tuesday morning teachers and supporters from popular social organizations set up around 15 barricades in the main square of the city of Oaxaca in response to threats of eviction that teachers of section 22 mentors have received from state and federal forces because of the sit-in.

Early in the morning, hooded men set the offices of the National Confederation of Popular Organizations on fire. They then fired a rocket towards a police line. The latter was almost certainly action on the part of provocateurs. It recalled the use by the Oaxaca state government of civilian vehicles with hooded and armed people who were engaged to shoot at the barricades installed throughout the city during the 2006 Oaxaca uprising.

There is evidence that some in the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) are becoming concerned that Nuño Mayer's hard line cost the PRI in the state elections on June 5, and will only whip up more resistance. The PRI has historically employed violence and the brutality of the police and military forces to crush social discontent. While such repression continues unabated under the current regime of President Enrique Peña Nieto, many think a more nuanced public face is required to take into account the "social mood."

For the ruling elite more generally, if discontent threatens to spin out of control they may look to Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his fake left party the National Regeneration Movement (Morena) to contain the situation.

But it is precisely with such bourgeois political currents that the CNTE and other pseudo-left organizations have sought to ally themselves.

Mexican workers must reject all such illusions, along with the straitjacket of the politics of the union leaders. The education struggle in Mexico can only succeed through a united political offensive by teachers and the entire working class of Mexico, independent of all of Mexico's bourgeois political parties.

Such a movement would find allies among teachers in the US and throughout Latin America who are facing the same attacks. Ultimately a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist profit system in Mexico, and throughout the Americas, is required.



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