

# Forced disappearances of protesters against police violence in Guadalajara

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Last Friday, the state police in Jalisco, Mexico, carried out the forced disappearance of dozens of youth in the city of Guadalajara, in the context of demonstrations involving thousands and centered around the police killings last month of George Floyd in the United States and Giovanni López in Jalisco.

Men in plainclothes, some wearing bulletproof vests, descended from unmarked pickup trucks and even a fake bakery truck, armed with rifles, clubs, bats and stun guns, and intercepted, blindfolded and kidnapped groups of youth as they approached the demonstration against police violence in front of the attorney general's office.

The Jalisco human rights ombudsman, Eduardo Sosa Márquez, told *Aristegui Noticias* Monday that his office received 35 complaints related to the repression, including “registered cases of forced disappearances against people who sought to protest peacefully, people passing by on their way home.”

He described the kidnappings: “The state deprives them of their liberty; denies having detained them; there is no official list of detainees; they took them and let them go 6, 7, 10 kilometers away, took away their belongings so that they couldn't get back or contact their families.”

He claimed that all those reported missing are now accounted for, based on a few home visits and social media publications by those reported missing, family members and friends.

The operation and the complicit silence of the federal government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador are a violent threat against growing social opposition across Mexico. As demonstrated by the militant protests against police brutality in Mexico and internationally, class tensions are on a hair trigger due to extreme levels of social inequality and the criminal response of the

governments to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has already overwhelmed hospitals and morgues and led to 12 million job losses in Mexico.

The incident has recalled the forced disappearance and killing of 43 teaching students of Ayotzinapa, who were kidnapped on their way to a protest in Mexico City against a regressive education reform in 2014, which involved the collaboration of local and federal police, the military, and a drug cartel.

The scale of the operation was much larger than that recognized by Sosa. One victim, David Mendoza, relates how “they had us in large pens and separate rooms, easily 6 of these and with 30 people in each of them. They constantly took people in and out, so what I saw was not the total of kidnapped people.” He added that there were at least 50 police officials there on top of those doing the rounds. The *Guardian* counted some 80 people from reports “held incommunicado” in the operation.

It has been established that they were held captive inside of the police precinct five km away.

According to social media publications and interviews by the victims, the kidnappers repeatedly announced that they would be “disappeared.” Mendoza cites the threat: “Look at what you did to your parents; now they'll have to look to one body after the other to try to find you.” The protesters were constantly beaten up.

Police officials demanded that the detainees give them access to their cellphones, messaging and social media groups. Medicines were also among the belongings taken away.

One youth, Violeta, told *Animal Político* that police asked if they belonged to “any association, group or movement, or in coordination with anyone to attack them.” An independent journalist who was also

kidnapped, Luis Antonio Maldonado, also described similar inquiries.

Once they were being gradually freed, the police threatened to “disappear” them for good if they saw them protesting again and that they would find their homes to check on them. One detainee described being given “ten seconds to run away” when dropped off, while reports on social media indicate that the officials used the confiscated cellphones to call contacts of the victims requesting their addresses.

While the kidnappings occurred on Friday, state authorities confirmed that they had arrested 26 demonstrators during the protests a day earlier. Police officials used beatings and tear gas against the demonstrators, while several were recorded inside the precinct on a cellphone crying out “we are going to kill them.”

On Saturday, hundreds marched peacefully across downtown Guadalajara to protest the police repression and demand the liberation of those kidnapped. Six demonstrators were arbitrarily arrested and were transferred near midnight on Monday to the Puente Grande maximum security prison without their lawyers or families having been informed. These protesters were freed as demonstrations grew on Tuesday morning.

On Sunday night, a peaceful demonstration in Torreón, Coahuila, against the killings of Giovanni López and George Floyd, was broken up by police, who arrested seven youth, including two minors who have been freed since.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico denounced on Twitter the incidents in Jalisco. “Forced disappearances and the disappearance of individuals are crimes in MX [Mexico],” the agency declared.

Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has exploited the accusations by the Jalisco governor, Enrique Alfaro Ramírez that the ruling party Morena was behind the spontaneous demonstrations to justify the federal government’s neglect and effective sanctioning of the month-long cover-up by local authorities of the murder of Giovanni López, as well as the violence and kidnappings last week. “I don’t get involved in partisanship; I don’t have any intention of affecting the local authorities. ... we have no interest in affecting the Jalisco government,” he said.

Alfaro has also suggested that the kidnappings were tied to organized crime and that the police defied his orders not to act violently. However, Alfaro himself is widely suspected of having facilitated the rise of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel into the largest in the country. The specialist and journalist Anabel Hernández confirmed documents in 2018 that both the US Treasury Department and Mexican Navy had carried out investigations into the ties between Alfaro and the Cartel.

López Obrador addressed the protests again on Tuesday, but continued to dismiss the disappearances in Tijuana, insisting that, “we are not repressive.” He then blamed demonstrators for “abuses,” “beating reporters,” “provoking, provoking and provoking,” though these were unsubstantiated by any facts.

The opposition to the measures by the Jalisco police among the ruling Morena party has been limited to the following flippant tweet by Martí Batres, the former president of the Senate, on Saturday night: “By the way, speaking of basements: to which basements in Guadalajara did they take the missing youth yesterday?”

The international character of the protests against police brutality is an indication that workers and youth are being pushed by the logic of events to find firmer ground upon which to take a stand against social inequality and the increasingly dictatorial forms of rule used to protect the Mexican oligarchy and US imperialism.

Workers and youth must join forces with their class brothers and sisters in the United States and beyond. However, this struggle also requires the development of a new leadership in the working class under a socialist and internationalist program against capitalism, the source of inequality and police violence.



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