

Mexicans protest on seventh anniversary of disappearance of 43 Ayotzinapa students

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Seven years after the disappearance of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa rural teaching college in the southwestern state of Guerrero, workers and youth mobilized in a week of protests across Mexico.

On the night of September 26–27, 2014, 57 students from the school, on their way to a protest rally in Mexico City, were seized after a confrontation with the police and the Mexican Army. In the confrontation, six were killed and 25 injured. Of those who were abducted, 43 went missing. Since then, the partial remains of three of the students have been found and identified.

The days of protests began on September 21, when parents of the 43 missing students marched in the streets of Chilpancingo, the capital of Guerrero State, together with members of the Mexican Federation of Socialist Rural Students (Federación de Estudiantes Campesinos Socialistas de México, FESM). The Chilpancingo demonstrators demanded a resolution to the case of the 43 students who were disappeared by the Mexican state.

This demand was repeated in all the rallies that took place across the country during the week, culminating in a mass demonstration in Mexico City on Sunday, September 26. Thousands of workers and students marched in the capital city and across the country chanting, “Where are they?” and “¡Vivos se los llevaron, vivos los queremos!” (They were taken alive, we want them back alive!) and demanding that the government respond.

The parents of the 43 disappeared students denounced the government’s refusal to bring to justice the architects of the “historical truth” about the crime—a fictional account of the events leading up to the disappearance of the 43 students that night, seven years ago—concealing evidence of the involvement of the

Mexican armed forces in their disappearance and presumed murder.

In October 2018, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) included uncovering the truth of the events of that night as one of his campaign promises when running for office. Almost halfway into his six-year mandate, this promise is still unfulfilled.

At a recent meeting with the parents, Lopez Obrador declared that the government is pursuing two lines of inquiry: seeking to recover remains and investigating the role played by officials of the Peña Nieto government (2012-2018) who invented the phony narrative misnamed “the historical truth.”

On September 24, as the protests were taking place, it was announced that 40 videos have been brought to light, further exposing the lies of the government’s “historical truth.” The videos, taped by the now-defunct National Investigations and Security Center (Centro de Investigaciones y Seguridad Nacional, CISEN), show government officials in the act of torturing witnesses in 2014 to extract confessions buttressing their false narrative. The videos, compiled by the Special Unit of Investigation and Litigation (Unidad Especial de Investigación y Litigación, UESIL), are further proof showing the initial investigation was manipulated by the Peña Nieto government.

The interrogations were videotaped between October 2014 (just days after the disappearance of the 43) and January 2015. The objective was to torture witnesses and suspects into repeating the government’s manufactured version of the facts. At the center of this plot were Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam and the Director of Criminal Investigations Tomas Zeron, who has since fled to Israel.

As a result of these maneuvers, the government of

President Peña Nieto announced that the 43 students had died at the hands of a local criminal drug cartel, Guerreros Unidos, which had burned their bodies at a garbage dump, placed their remains in plastic bags and thrown them into the San Juan River in Cocula, a town near Iguala, where the attack on the students took place.

Federal authorities insisted that their findings were not to be doubted, calling them the “historical truth,” a phrase first used by Murillo Karam. With this incantation, the investigation of the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa 43 was effectively frozen, covering up the role of the military.

Evidence since then has revealed that the Army’s 27th Infantry Division, stationed in Guerrero State, was deeply involved. The disappeared students were taken to the army base, tortured and then delivered to the Guerreros Unidos gang for incineration at a local mortuary. Small pieces of remains were planted in the vicinity of the San Juan River to lend veracity to the official story.

From the beginning, relatives of the disappeared students questioned this official story. Their suspicions were confirmed by an investigation carried out by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (CIDH) and its Interdisciplinary Independent Experts Group (GIEI) that demolished the government’s account.

A year ago, President Lopez Obrador indicated that arrests would begin of 89 people involved in the case. So far, 40 individuals have been arrested, including Capt. Jose Martinez Crespo of the 27th Infantry, allegedly for conducting the interrogations of the disappeared students. The relatives insist that this is the tip of the iceberg. Meanwhile, the armed forces continue to stonewall the investigation.

Twenty-one on the arrest list have either died or been assassinated.

Since 1964, over 90,000 people have been “disappeared” in Mexico. In addition, some 52,000 bodies have yet to be identified out of an estimated death toll of 250,000. This war on society accelerated under the presidency of Felipe Calderon (2006-2012). Under the pretext of a “war on drug gangs,” the Mexican government unleashed a brutal class war targeting human rights advocates, left-wing activists and the press. The attack on the Ayotzinapa students was part of this campaign. Only a small minority of the casualties and arrests from this war involved members

of drug syndicates.

The so-called war on the drug gangs took place in the context of the Merida Initiative, a US-Mexico military alliance, established in 2007, supporting the Mexican armed forces with training and armaments that have been used mainly to repress the population.



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