

Who is Omar García Harfuch, ruling Morena party's top candidate to head Mexico City government?

Jesus Ugarte, Don Knowland
31 October 2023

Two weeks after stepping down as Mexico City's (CDMX) police chief (secretary of public security), Omar García Harfuch announced his intention to seek the ruling Morena party candidacy for Head of Government of CDMX, the most populous metropolis on the American continent.

This marks the latest phase in a political trajectory often characterized as meteoric. García's rise is an expression of the socio-political and economic conditions that have shaped the repression of the Mexican populace under the last three presidential administrations.

It also points to the continued and longstanding high state connections to military oppression and drug cartels of the ruling Morena party of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).

García Harfuch hails from a family with deep ties to the security apparatus under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled Mexico for 80 years, from 1930 to 2010.

His grandfather, Marcelino García Barragán, was governor of Jalisco state and served as Defense Secretary during the Gustavo Díaz Ordaz administration. He is notably associated with orchestrating, in conjunction with the CIA, the infamous 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre, where Army troops opened fire on protesting students after surrounding them with tanks, killing between 300 and 400.

García's father is Javier García Paniagua, the former PRI national president and leader of the Federal Security Directorate (DFS), Mexico's notoriously brutal secret police and intelligence agency. García Paniagua's tenure at the helm of the DFS was marked by sanctioning torture and negotiating with the drug cartels of that era.

He headed the so-called "Dirty War" from 1976 to 1980 against left-wing student and guerrilla groups, when government forces carried out thousands of disappearances, systematic torture and extrajudicial executions.

Several drug cartel leaders emerged from DFS ranks, including the Sinaloa state born Juárez Cartel leader Amado Carrillo Fuentes, known as the "Lord of the Skies," for the fleet of jets he used to transport drugs.

García Harfuch's half-brother, Javier García Morales, had affiliations with Army generals who were integral to the security force of Carrillo's Juárez Cartel. García Morales was ultimately assassinated outside a restaurant by rival cartel hitmen. Both he and García Harfuch's father have been named in legal documents indicating likely ties to Carrillo.

Omar García Harfuch's own trajectory in the national security apparatus continues the family legacy. After obtaining degrees in law and public security, he underwent specialized security training at Harvard University, the FBI, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

In 2008, García Harfuch joined the Federal Police as Intelligence Coordinator for Crime Prevention. In 2012, he became Federal Police State Coordinator for the southern state of Guerrero, and in 2015 he

assumed the role of Chief of the Division of Investigation of the Federal Preventive Police (PFP).

From November 2016 through 2018 García Harfuch served as the Commissioner of the Agency of Criminal Investigation, the equivalent of Mexico's FBI, succeeding Tomás Zerón. The latter led the coverup of the case involving the 43 rural teaching students (normalistas) from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero state, who were disappeared and killed in 2014 by cartel members and Army units.

Zerón is now a fugitive from justice in Israel. Apart from the Ayotzinapa coverup, he is also accused of embezzling over \$50 million and torturing suspects. His boss at the time, Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam, who was the chief architect of the coverup, was jailed in July 2022 on charges of forced disappearance, torture and obstruction of justice.

Phone records show that García Harfuch, when he was head of the federal police in Guerrero state, attended a high-level meeting held within a couple of days of the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa 43 where the "Verdad Histórica" ("historical truth"), the official government-endorsed coverup of state complicity in the disappearance of the 43 normalistas, was initially cooked up.

In June 2019, García Harfuch assumed the role of Chief of Police Investigation (PDI) for the Attorney General's Office of Mexico City, while also coordinating intelligence for then Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum's security cabinet. Subsequently, he was appointed as the Secretary of Citizen Security, the equivalent of police chief, for Mexico City in October 2019, a position he held until he threw his hat in the ring in September 2023 for Mexico City mayor to replace Sheinbaum, who resigned to run as the Morena's candidate for president in the 2024 election.

Mexican government's ties to drug cartels

Ties between high-ranking government officials and organized crime have been a recurring issue in Mexican politics for decades, spanning multiple administrations, including those of former PRI presidents Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Enrique Peña Nieto, who preceded AMLO, and former PAN (National Action Party) President Felipe Calderón. All of them have faced accusations of selective collaboration with narcotics cartels and massive payoffs.

Under the current administration of AMLO, who vowed to root out corruption, strong suspicions persist about links between members of his ruling Morena party and organized crime groups. AMLO notably

exonerated former defense minister Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos, who had been detained in the US on charges of facilitating cartel drug shipments. Cienfuegos was returned to Mexico and remains uncharged.

Evidence, albeit inconclusive, has also surfaced over the years regarding García Harfuch's own links to drug cartels. In May 2021, a member of the Cartel Nueva Plaza, known as "El Cholo", claimed to have García Harfuch's support against their rivals in the Guadalajara-centered Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG).

In January of the same year, a protected witness identified only as "Juan," told the FGR that García Harfuch was receiving money from the Guerreros Unidos cartel, the same gang involved in the killing of the Ayotzinapa 43. Additionally, his name appeared in a ledger dating from 2019 belonging to Sidronio Casarrubias, a leader of Guerreros Unidos.

Upon joining the police force in 2008, García Harfuch was the protégé of Luis Cárdenas Palomino, a former senior law enforcement official and right-hand man of Genaro García Luna, the highest security official under PAN President Felipe Calderón from 2006-2012. Cárdenas Palomino is currently detained on torture charges.

García Luna was convicted in February 2023 by a federal jury in Brooklyn, New York of engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise that included six drug-related violations, including an international cocaine distribution conspiracy and making false statements. Evidence showed that he took millions of dollars in bribes from the Sinaloa cartel. He faces 20 years to life in prison. The head of Mexico's anti-money laundering agency said last year that García Luna stole as much as \$746 million from government technology contracts.

In June 2020, members of the cartel CJNG attacked García Harfuch in Mexico City; he suffered three bullet wounds that did not put his life at risk. Since CJNG did not have significant operations in Mexico City, it is more likely he was shot not for pursuing the cartel, but for protecting a rival.

In spite of this background, García Harfuch has garnered significant public support for his run for Mexico City's highest office, which was reflected in his consistent lead in opinion polls, even before he declared his candidacy. His survival of the June 2020 assassination attempt has been presented as evidence of his commitment to combating organized crime.

García Harfuch has made the dubious claim that his term as the Secretary of Citizen Security for Mexico City from October 2019 to September 2023 saw a 31 percent reduction in homicides. This may, however, have resonated with a populace living under the constant threat of unchecked violence.

García Harfuch's background has caused more militant sections of Morena to line up their support behind Clara Brugada, the current mayor of the Iztapalapa neighborhood in Mexico City.

His opponents cite the declaration of Alejandro Encinas, who succeeded AMLO as Mexico City mayor for a year and is now his undersecretary of the Interior, and who headed up AMLO's "Commission for Truth and Access to Justice in the Ayotzinapa Case," that García Harfuch had indeed participated in the meetings where the so-called "historical truth" was created to cover up the role of the Army and the federal police.

Those opposing García Harfuch further reproach him for failing to provide information to the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), whose investigation into the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa 43 demolished the official version.

García Harfuch is also criticized for not admitting or condemning the crimes committed in the past by his father during the dirty war, and those of his grandfather related to the Tlatelolco massacre.

These dissidents likewise point to his ties to Luis Cárdenas Palomino, the right-hand man of García Luna, both of whom were linked to drug lords.

In March 2019, when releasing government documents about the Dirty

War and political persecution by the PRI governments, López Obrador stated that "We lived for decades under an authoritarian regime which limited freedoms and persecuted those who struggled for social change" and issued an official apology on behalf of the Mexican State towards the victims of the repression.

But the hypocrisy of this declaration is exposed by García Harfuch's candidacy. While initially reserved in his commentary on the candidate, AMLO has recently shifted his tone to praise his contributions to public security.

In the wake of the 2021 elections, in which Morena lost nine out of 16 local mayoral seats in Mexico City, the party faces an uphill electoral battle in the capital in the 2024 elections.

A party that proclaims its commitment to the poor and the working class, Morena is now positioning an upper-class top police official, with at best a dubious record as to repression of the working class and corruption, as candidate to run the country's capital.

AMLO, Sheinbaum and party officials are dismissing calls for an investigation of García Harfuch, which could only further expose the party's "leftist" claims and instead reveal an increasingly right-wing, bourgeois, law-and-order party.

Lenin, in "The State and Revolution," characterized the state as "bodies of armed men," referring to the police, military, and other organs of state coercion. This description encapsulates the role of the state in enforcing the will of the ruling class through the use or threat of violence. The potential appointment of this prominent member of a blood-stained and corrupt national security apparatus is a stark expression of the state's function as an instrument to uphold class rule.

Capitalist governments around the globe routinely exploit fear of crime to justify intensification of attacks on democratic rights. During his five years in office, AMLO has overseen an increasing militarization of the nation, including the domestic deployment of the Army and Navy.

The promotion of García Harfuch is one more marked step down that road. For all of AMLO's talk of ending corruption and lifting up the Mexican masses, in the final analysis he has ended up supporting further repression, corruption and impunity.

An authentic resolution to the pervasive violence and poverty confronting the working class must grapple with its root cause, the system of capitalist production for profit. In Mexico this finds its most brutal expression in the drug cartels and their intimate relationship to the state and its officials.

This can only be ended through the working class taking power on the basis of an international revolutionary socialist program. Only then will the underlying conditions that give rise to the exploitation, misery and violence the Mexican state has generated for decades be swept aside, including the large-scale narcotics trafficking and attendant violence it has sustained.

This requires building a Trotskyist party in Mexico as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact