

Mexican police kill Ayotzinapa student hours after AMLO likened protest to “dirty war”

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Last Thursday, March 7, police shot dead Yanqui Khotan Gómez Peralta, a student of the Ayotzinapa rural teaching college in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero. This is the same institution attended by the 43 students killed in the infamous case of September 2014. Two other students were arrested and tortured.

On Monday, president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) acknowledged that the police had lied about the students firing first, noting that there had been an “abuse of authority.” He then called on the officer involved to turn himself in, explaining that he had escaped with the assistance of the local authorities.

The governor of Guerrero, Evelyn Salgado, belongs to AMLO’s Morena party and seconded the statements of the president about the incident.

On Wednesday night, two of the three officials presumably involved turned themselves in, but the one who reportedly fired the weapon remains on the run.

López Obrador and Salgado have gone into damage control, attempting to cover over their own responsibility and any explosive details. The government undoubtedly fears that the incident will renew mass protests ahead of the 10th anniversary of the disappearance of the 43.

Protests have already erupted across Guerrero, with students burning patrol cars, invading the state prosecutor’s office and setting up roadblocks. The family and classmates of the victim are demanding the arrest of those responsible and the resignation of Salgado.

According to available reports summed up by the Mexican daily *La Jornada*, the night of the shooting, three students stopped at a store on their way to pick up other students and participate in the 98th anniversary celebration of their college. State police approached them on motorcycles with their guns drawn, shouting commands, and then firing.

Gómez Peralta was shot in the head, suggesting a deliberate intention to kill. The second student, Osiel

Faustino Jiménez Dircio, was beaten up and arrested, while a third one, nicknamed *Arenita*, tried to run away but was later arrested by a soldier and handed over to the police, who beat him up for two hours. Osiel and *Arenita* were then taken to a dark place and ordered not to tell anyone about their treatment.

The police officials planted a gun, munitions, bags with a “crystalline substance” and beer cans in the vehicle. The initial report claimed the car had been reported stolen and that the students fired first, but this has been proven false.

According to *Jornada* journalist Luis Hernández Navarro Hernández, Gómez Peralta was in his fourth semester studying to become a primary school teacher. He was a promoter of the traditional Tlacoloreros dance, enjoyed riding horses, and ran track for a local club. In his Facebook page, there are publications indicating he was active in demonstrations.

At the funeral, his mother Lilia Vianey Gómez spoke powerfully: “We have to keep on fighting so that all this ends and you have better things. We must not be left behind, we must not sell out either. The government will always talk with lies. The police will always sell out, because they are the same as the government. That is why now I am one more of the 43.”

Even 10 years later, there has not been a full accounting of what led to the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students. In 2014 and last week, officials at the highest levels instinctively launched an effort to cover up the culprits and the underlying causes of their crimes.

Some commentators have pointed to the ties of the police and military to organized crime as a likely factor, since the 43 students were killed and their bodies disappeared in an operation involving gangs, police and the military.

The most glaring circumstance of the latest attack is that it took place one day after a group of Ayotzinapa teaching students and parents of the 43 carried out a protest where

they knocked down a door of the National Palace, where president López Obrador was giving a press conference.

Imagen Noticias has confirmed on video and from relatives that Gómez Peralta was among the students who knocked down the door of the presidential building only 35 hours before being shot dead. The protesters were denouncing the government's ongoing cover-up of the role of the military in the 2014 massacre.

The president responded to this protest by calling it a “provocation” and “dirty war” against his administration, claiming the organizations behind it were being backed by foreign governments. His handpicked presidential candidate for this year's elections, Claudia Sheinbaum, echoed his statements.

While AMLO said there would be no reprisals against the protesters in Mexico City, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned in an article published the night of the shooting in Guerrero, “his statements and those of Sheinbaum set the stage for such repression.”

The response by the president could have easily been interpreted as a declaration of open season on the students, and Thursday's attack is in part meant to terrorize students, parents and supporters planning protests for the 10th anniversary of the 2014 events.

This was the 11th killing of a teaching student from the same Ayotzinapa college in recent years, outside of the 43. This has included victims of live ammunition fired by police against road blockades.

Rural teaching colleges in general have long been considered hotbeds of left-wing politics by the ruling class. Today the students are organized in the Mexican Federation of Socialist Rural Students (FECSM), which was founded in 1935 by members of the Stalinist Mexican Communist Party (PCM). Just a year after its founding, the organization endorsed the Mexican Popular Front alliance with the bourgeois nationalist government of president Lázaro Cárdenas, who officially recognized the FECSM as the representative of the students.

The FECSM was later associated with the development of Guevaraist guerrillas in the 1960s and its members were among the main targets of the actual “dirty wars” of state murders of left-wing activists that reached its climax in the years following the 1968 massacre of Tlatelolco in Mexico City, when the military killed hundreds of students.

These conditions of draconian repression at schools led to a brief dissolution of the FECSM, but it was reconstituted in 1972. For many leaders, it has served as an entryway into local and even national politics,

including within AMLO's Morena party.

The Ayotzinapa section of the FECSM has been a particular target of the ruling class. It carries out almost yearly protests and roadblocks to demand appropriate funding and allowances, and it was very active in the 2014 protests against the Pact for Mexico—a set of measures that were aimed at preparing privatizations and social cuts.

Military documents leaked by the Guacamaya group revealed that the military was spying on the spokespeople of the parents of the Ayotzinapa victims, as well as human rights advocates and politicians associated with them. According to the leaks, this espionage, which included phone tapping, continued under AMLO until at least 2022.

While power changed hands to the pseudo-left Morena party—from the Party for Democratic Revolution (PRD) that governed Guerrero and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that ruled nationally in 2014—the role played by the military and the police remains unchanged.

López Obrador has often said that extrajudicial executions were the official policy of the military and police before his administration. His predecessors had the idea of “killing them all, torturing and massacring,” he said last year, but his government chose to “attend to the youth and strengthen their values.”

The latest killing confirms the maxim of Marxism that, under capitalism, regardless of which party is in power, the state plays the role of enforcing class rule by violently crushing opposition to the diktats of the national bourgeoisie and imperialism.



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