

Revvng up the dirty war in Oaxaca

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Editorial note

We bring to the attention of Global Research readers this carefully prepared review of unfolding events in Oaxaca, Mexico by Professor George Salzman, who has documented in detail the violations of human rights.

The coverage of these momentous events which have a bearing on Mexico's political future have been virtually ignored by the mainstream media. Also included here is a report by Amanda Aquino, which confirms extensive human rights violations.

Global Research, 12 November 2006

After some weeks of relatively quiet nights, beginning Friday 27 October with the by-now infamous attack on one of the barricades in Santa Lucia del Camino,[1] the entire relatively peaceful complexion of the struggle [2] has become badly tainted by the presence of the so-called Federal Preventive Police (PFP in its Spanish initials).

Under PFP 'protection', and with PFP participation, the combined level of the dirty war by the Oaxaca PRI contingent of Ulises Ruiz and the PFP mushroomed — so intolerably in fact that the church offered asylum to members of the popular movement because of the threats and the jump in the numbers of dead, arrested, and disappeared. Unfortunately (and predictably), it's not 'just' the state agents and allied paramilitaries who are doing the really dirty work.

There are people who were snatched by the PFP who haven't even been identified, some of them seized at the most active large conflict area — the university campus,[3] where the radio station is located — on helicopters and not accounted for (according to some of the material I've read).[4] Most assuredly the PFP, or at least some of its 'special forces', is itself a terrorist organization.

I'm certain the so-called 'counter terrorism' operations discussed in the Narco News article by Diego Enrique Osorno [5] are being actively implemented by both Ulises Ruíz's state and paramilitary agents, and by the highly-trained hit teams of the PFP, the latter undoubtedly led by officers trained at the School of the Americas. Terrorism against popular social movements is serious business for repressive governments, whether in Central America, Mexico, Iraq, Palestine, Colombia, or wherever.

The escalation of terror timetable

Prior to 27 October the rate of deaths among members of Section 22 (the Oaxaca part) of the Education Workers Union and of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO in

its initials in Spanish) had been amazingly low, as I emphasized in my earlier reports and commentaries.[6]

It is difficult — probably impossible at this time — to obtain precise figures for the killed, injured, arrested, kidnapped, tortured, and disappeared, but what is quite clear is that the rates have risen sharply within the past several weeks.[7] First 5 months, 15 May to 13 Oct – about 6 known violent deaths (from note [2] link) 13 days, 14 Oct to 26 Oct – 5 violent deaths (from Nancy Davies, ND, and above first 5 months) 3 days, 27 Oct to 29 Oct – 6 violent deaths, 33 wounded (from ND) 29 Oct – 22 arrested, subsequently released, plus 11 arrests reported by telephone but unconfirmed 30 Oct – 12 arrested, subsequently released, plus 6 arrests reported by telephone but unconfirmed 1 Nov – 4 arrested, imprisoned 2 Nov – 46 arrested, imprisoned, plus 25 arrests reported by telephone but unconfirmed 4 Nov – 2 arrested, imprisoned 5 Nov – 1 teacher arrested when he came to attend a meeting with heads of families (parents) 3 students disappeared outside Radio Universidad (from ND, specific date not given) 3 minors were arrested and imprisoned (specific dates not given) 3 arrests reported by telephone but no contacts with the arrestees made (specific dates not given)

The above data provide a conservative view of the extent of terror imposed by the state and federal governments on the people of Oaxaca from 27 Oct to 5 Nov.[8]

There are widespread credible reports of homes being broken into by PFP special troops with neither search warrants nor arrest warrants and people having been arrested and their homes trashed in supposed searches for illegal weapons. Along with these illegal activities of the PFP, the PRI-operatives of Ulises Ruíz also stepped up their paramilitary type operations.

The intensity of this surge of state-imposed terror became so flagrant in the past few days that on Thursday 9 Nov APPO asked the diocese of Oaxaca to grant asylum to its members – particularly its prominent members who are under threat of assassination. The legal officer of the local Catholic hierarchy, speaking officially, responded promptly – the same day – positively, and with a scathing indictment of the lawless state behavior, asserting in part that there exists “state terrorism and a schizophrenic persecution”.[9]

To appreciate the full significance of this indictment by Wilfredo Mayren, the legal officer of the local diocese, it’s important to know that the Antequera-Oaxaca Archbishop, José Luis Chávez Botello, had until then, for almost six months, maintained a disgustingly pseudo-neutral position, repeatedly saying he deplores violence, that he wants peace, without ever before acknowledging that the violence was in fact coming almost exclusively from the power structure. He had white flags flown from the two major Catholic architectural treasures of the city, signifying a desire to end the conflict and return to ‘normal’, the ‘normalcy’ enjoyed by the well-to-do and suffered by the poor majority. His preference was for Oaxaca to return to the usual suffering endured by the impoverished majority of Oaxaqueños, to whom the Church could offer eternal joys in heaven, but hardly a crust of bread on earth, to say nothing of human dignity and human rights. In this light the Church’s belated but welcome condemnation of state terrorism is profoundly significant.

The most recent report I have is from a long-time friend currently in Oaxaca, Amanda Aquino, who prefaces her interview with a human rights worker,[10]

November 9th, 2006 Oaxaca is living a brutal government repression of the social

movement, where there are disappearances, torture, detentions, killings, and many injured. Given the situation, it is difficult to know exactly how many people have been affected, but there is no doubt that there are severe violations of human rights. According to the Oaxaca Network for Human Rights (Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos), from June 14th through November 5th, there were 145 detained, 34 of whom have been freed, 17 dead, and 33 seriously injured, including 5 journalists injured and one killed. Some sources speak of 65 disappeared. There are numerous people who have also received death threats.

This article is also at http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strate/2006-11-11.htm

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Note: Because of the urgent need to get information out as rapidly as possible, I am foregoing my usual effort to provide as complete a list of sources as I would wish. Although I will post this immediately, somewhat incomplete, I will try to fill in the missing references later.

NOTES

[1] (to be added later)

[2] Relatively peaceful struggle, analyzed in the essay "A revolution with an absolute minimum of violence": It's not 'news' - but it should be", at http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strate/2006-10-13.htm .

[3] Campus of the Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca. The location of University City, which houses Radio Universidad, is described in the report "Attack on the University Radio", at http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strate/2006-11-02.htm .

[4] (to be added later)

[5] Diego Enrique Osorno, "Operation "Clean-Up" in Oaxaca: Following the CIA's "Psychological Operations" Manual for the Nicaraguan Contras, the State Government Has Unleashed a Bloody Counterinsurgency Strategy to Eliminate the Social Movement", at http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strate/2006-11-02.htm .

[6] Amazingly low casualty rate in non-violent revolution. See for example the discussion of fatalities in the essay linked to in note [2] above.

[7] Figures compiled from my paper of 13 Oct (linked to in note [2] above), info from Nancy Davies, and lists prepared by the Oaxaca Human Rights Network, dated 5 Nov 2006. The total of 11 violent deaths for the first 5 months and 13 days agrees with the figure for violent deaths prior to 27 Oct in the Network report. The Network address is Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos, Crespo 524, Centro, C.P. 68000, Oaxaca, México. Telfax 01-951-514-1634. <rodhmx@yahoo.com.mx>.

[8] I have not attempted to collect data from 5 Nov onward.

[9] Report on asylum, at http://www.cronica.com.mx/nota.php?id_nota=270483 . It was posted at 1:27 am Friday morning as follows. My translation follows the Spanish.

[10] See Amanda Aquino's Full Report below.

ANNEX

The Archbishopric of Oaxaca decides to give asylum to leaders of APPO By: Notimex in Oaxaca

Friday 10 of November 2006

The legal officer of the archdiocese of Oaxaca, Wilfredo Mayren, indicated that the Catholic hierarchy decided to give asylum to the leaders of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) because there exists "state terrorism and a schizophrenic persecution" against them.

In a brief interview, he said that there are those who think that arresting or eliminating people is going to solve the problem. In facing that [situation] the Church must fulfill one of its principal missions, which is to help and protect whoever is truly in danger, in his physical integrity as well as mortally.

Because of this, he said, the Catholic Church decided to offer the house of God [as sanctuary] because otherwise "we would have demonstrated a myopic and shortsighted view [of what is happening]. Thus he is able to offer protection to those who are in danger, and not from not from what they have done. If we had not done anything we could never have lived it down.

He thought that this Thursday, they will be able to continue an extended dialogue with the members of APPO to establish reciprocal compromises. "We would like to say to them that with dedicated common sense there will be efforts to get to a negotiated resolution to the conflict."

At the same time he indicated that the church indeed saw a true danger to the leaders of APPO and because of that the archbishopric approved giving them asylum.

The above is a translation. Spanish original below

Spanish Original

November 9th, 2006

Decide el Arzobispado de Oaxaca dar asilo a dirigentes de la APPO Por: Notimex en Oaxaca

Viernes 10 de Noviembre de 2006 | Hora de publicación: 01:27

El apoderado legal de la arquidiócesis de Oaxaca, Wilfredo Mayren, señaló que la jerarquía católica decidió dar asilo a los dirigentes de la Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO), porque existe en su contra "un terrorismo de Estado y una persecución esquizofrénica".

En breve entrevista, señaló que hay quienes piensan que deteniendo o eliminando a la gente van a arreglar el problema, y ante ello la Iglesia debe cumplir una de sus principales misiones que es ayudar y proteger a quienes están verdadero peligro, tanto en su

integridad física como de su vida.

Por ello, dijo, la Iglesia católica tomó la determinación de brindar la casa de Dios porque de otra forma “hubiéramos mostrado una visión miope y corta, pues el haber podido brindar el resguardo a quienes están en peligro y no haberlo hecho, hubiera sido algo que no habríamos podido superar”.

Estimó que este jueves podrá sostenerse un diálogo amplio con los integrantes de la APPO para establecer compromisos recíprocos y “nos gustaría pedirles que con absoluta sensatez y cordura se hagan esfuerzos para llegar a una salida negociada al conflicto.

Asimismo señaló que la Iglesia sí vio un verdadero peligro en contra de los dirigentes de la APPO y fue por ello que el arzobispado aceptó darles asilo.

Amanda Aquino's full report

URGENT: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN OAXACA

November 9th, 2006

Oaxaca is living a brutal government repression of the social movement, where there are disappearances, torture, detentions, killings, and many injured. Given the situation, it is difficult to know exactly how many people have been affected, but there is no doubt that there are severe violations of human rights. According to the Oaxaca Network for Human Rights (Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos), from June 14th through November 5th, there were 145 detained, 34 of whom have been freed, 17 dead, and 33 seriously injured, including 5 journalists injured and one killed. Some sources speak of 65 disappeared. There are numerous people who have also received death threats.

Below is an interview with one of the members of the Human Rights Collective, working to defend human rights and documenting cases of violations.

From the “planton” of Santo Domingo, Oaxaca:

What is the human rights situation here in Oaxaca?

Human rights basically do not exist here anymore. All human rights are out of order. You can be at any moment kidnapped by people who call themselves police. They can be mercenaries. They can put you in jail. They can make you disappear. And you don't have any human rights.

This is ironic because Mexico, this year, is in the human rights leadership in the UN. They should watch and guard human rights, but they are the first to do away with them.

What violations of human rights have there been?

The violations can be killing them, torturing them, beating them. We have now reports of people who were in jail. They were kept for two, three days without any food, nothing to drink. They wanted to go to the toilet but they didn't give them a toilet, just made them urinate in their pants, this kind of abuse. They are threatening their families.

And we also have numbers. We are talking about at least 45 disappeared people. We have

the first report of people who saw with their own eyes how a teacher was thrown out of a flying helicopter. Also we have a report, not verified yet, of a doctor who works in a hospital, who saw twenty dead people the 2nd of November (the day of a major confrontation between government and popular forces). This was in a hospital of Oaxaca.

We are still in the process of verifying all this. There is a danger that days go by and that a lot of these crimes cannot be proved anymore. Therefore, it is very very important that everybody join us, gives us a hand to document this.

Is it known how these people were disappeared?

Some were kidnapped from their houses. The police entered in the middle of the night, at one, two in the morning, without arrest warrants, and they took our compañeros away. Others disappeared from the barricades. Others we know were walking on the street and they took them away also. Others disappeared last Sunday, when there was a march here in Oaxaca and there was great national support. People came from Mexico City, Chiapas, and there were military checkpoints. There they also disappeared various compañeros.

Do you have documented cases of people who have been killed or detained?

We know that from the 14 of June (when the government repression began) until today, November 9th, there have been 17 dead people. We have the names of all of them, their age. Two were children, one a 14-year-old child and one a 12-year-old child. Detained, from the 29th of October (when the federal police force came in) until the 5th of November, we have 87 people who were detained. But one should say they were kidnapped because there were no arrest warrants. 34 of them have been freed.

What information is there in terms of who is responsible for these killings?

We know that the responsible is the government of the state of Oaxaca, Ulises Ruiz (the "governor"), and some of his police force, dressed in civilian clothes killed some of the 17 people. Some of the 6 people who have been killed in the last few days were killed by the PFP, the federal police force, which was sent in on the 29th of October.

Besides this, we are getting everyday reports of shootings at the university campus, where Radio Universidad is. It's almost a daily affair. People come and take out their guns and shoot at the students.

What are the efforts that are being done to protect human rights?

Here, we are working hard with volunteers and lawyers. We have a collective. First we try to locate the prisoners in the jails, and to liberate them. But the work has to go much further. We have to find the disappeared! The liberated come back and can report on the abuses, the violence, the beatings. But we are very very worried about the disappeared.

What would you ask of people listening to you from other parts of the world?

We ask for solidarity. You can create committees in solidarity and put pressure on your local politicians where you live and also demand from the Mexican embassies and consulates wherever you are that human rights be respected here and to call an end to this violence.

Aside from the detained, the disappeared, I already have seen with my own eyes, people

who are obviously traumatized, and who have psychosis due to the violence they have witnessed. Yesterday, a woman came here who was crying, and the next minute she was laughing. This was the effect of the trauma that these people are suffering. Two days ago, a woman came by who was participating in a peaceful women's march, which passed the zocalo, where the police threw rocks and she ended up with her nose and mouth torn up and bloody.

There are many abuses. And here we cannot expect anything from the government, from the judicial branch, because they are the same people who are committing these crimes.

Anything else you would like to share?

I would like to call on all the compañeros and compañeras of the world, who hear this: international solidarity live on! The struggle of the people of Oaxaca is for a better world, and this is the same struggle that people in the United States, in Europe, wherever they are carry on.

Interview by Amanda Aquino, Indymedia.

All comments and criticisms are welcome. george.salzman@umb.edu

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