



Ayotzinapa to Ottawa Caravan

April 12–May 2, 2015

Vivos se los llevaron, ¡Vivos los queremos!

They took them alive, we want them back alive!

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Media Kit

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“Vivos se los llevaron, vivos los queremos!”

“They took them alive, we want them back alive”

On September 26, 2014, Mexican state security forces attacked a group of students from the teachers' college in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, who were collecting donations for a trip to Mexico City in order to participate in the annual commemoration of a 1968 government massacre of students. The attack left 6 people dead – three students and three bystanders – and ended with the forcible disappearance of 43 others who were picked up by police and never seen again. The crime has pulled the veil off an acute human rights crisis in Mexico. The search for the students has uncovered more than 15 mass graves in neighbouring areas of the state of Guerrero, none of them containing the bodies of the students.

Now, Canadian solidarity and human-rights organizations have launched the Ayotzinapa to Ottawa Caravan – a tour bringing an Ayotzinapa student organizer, a parent of one of the disappeared students, and a Mexican human-rights lawyer to Canada in order to tell their story to the public and to Canadian policy makers. The delegation from Guerrero includes: Hilda Legideño Vargas, mother of Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideño, one of the students disappeared on Sept. 26, 2014; Jorge Luis Clemente Balbuena, a spokesperson for the 43 students from the Raul Isidro Burgos teachers school; and Isidoro Vicario Aguilar, member of the Human Rights organization Tlachinollan, which is representing the families of the 43 Ayotzinapa students.

The caravan is taking place over three weeks from April 12 to May 2 2015 and encompass events in British Columbia, Quebec, and Ontario. On April 28th, the delegation will testify before the Subcommittee for International Human Rights at the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa. Through public education events, workshops for teachers and other groups, meetings with Members of Parliament, and community fundraisers, the tour seeks

- to raise public awareness of the permanent and systemic violence, both criminal and state-supported, that permeates public life in Mexico;
- to generate media coverage about humans rights violations in Mexico in general and attacks on the Indigenous peoples of Mexico in particular, and the challenges facing those seeking justice;
- to forge links between Mexican and Canadian civil-society organizations; and,
- to press Canadian parliamentarians and policy makers to acknowledge the human rights crisis in Mexico, to hold the Mexican government to international human rights norms, to review Canada's program of cooperation with Mexico, and to eliminate barriers for people seeking protection in Canada.

The tour is supported by a wide range of organizations who ask the Canadian Government to break its public silence about the violence in Mexico and urge Mexican authorities to effectively investigate the murders and forced disappearances that took place on September 26 and 27, 2014, until the missing students are found and those responsible for the attack, including public officials, have been identified and brought to justice.

Tour organizers and participants are calling on the Canadian Government to urge the Mexican government to respect freedom of expression and assembly in Mexico. The murders and disappearances from Ayotzinapa have awakened a massive movement that is pressuring the Peña Nieto administration to resign and is calling for fundamental change. However, Mexico is a country in which non-violent political organizers are frequently imprisoned, tortured, or kidnapped and secretly killed. Furthermore, death threats against human-rights defenders by paramilitary groups with suspected ties to state agencies are not usually investigated; even paramilitary killings receive at best cursory attention from the Mexican justice system. After the Ayotzinapa disappearances, those who have spoken up for human rights or taken part in protests have faced a pattern of disproportionate use of force, trumped up charges, threats and attacks, amidst a climate of widespread impunity.

Canada must not let considerable commercial interests in Mexico prevent it from taking a forceful stand on this dire situation.

Organizers: CIPO-Vancouver and Co-Development Canada (CODEV) in British Columbia, the Committee for Human Rights in Latin America (CDHAL) in Quebec; Fuerza-Puwerza, Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network (LACSN), and Common Frontiers in Ontario, and Amnesty International Canada.

Sponsors and Supporters: BC Teachers Federation (BCTF), United Food and Commercial Workers Canada (UFCW), United Steelworkers Canada (USW), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE National and CUPE BC), Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Social Justice Fund, Simon Fraser University Graduate Students Society (GSS), SFU Education Graduate Students Association, Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (SFPIRG), UBC First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program, UBC Global Fund, UBC Department of Sociology, UBC Program of Latin American Studies, SFU Institute for the Humanities, SFU Department of History, SFU School of Criminology, Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, York University (CERLAC), Ontario Public Interest Research Group – Guelph (OPIRG), The peak, Growing community health, Colectivo Alternativa latinoamericana, Pay more get less campaign, Centrale syndicale du Québec (CSQ), Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain de la CSN, Laboratoire interdisciplinaire d'études latino-américaines, Faculté des sciences humaines, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Institut d'études internationales de Montréal (IEIM), L'Entraide missionnaire, Coalition québécoise sur les impacts socio-environnementaux des transnationales en Amérique latine (QUISETAL), Chaire Nycole Turmel sur les espaces publics et les innovations politiques de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Mexicain.e.s uni.e.s pour la régularisation, Réseau québécois d'intégration continentale (RQIC), Fédération des travailleuses et travailleurs du Québec (FTQ), Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO), Laboratoire d'études latino-américaines, Réseau d'études latino-américaines de Montréal, Comité UQAM Amérique latine, Solidarité Laurentides Amérique centrale, Comité de solidarité québécoise à Ayotzinapa and many more organizations and individuals of the community!

Speaker Bios

Jorge Luis Clemente Balbuena.

Jorge is from the community of Capulín Chocolate, Guerrero. He is a student in the 3rd year of his BA in primary education at the Escuela Normal de Ayotzinapa. He is a schoolmate of the 43 students kidnapped by the police on the 26 of September in Iguala Guerrero. Jorge continues as a member of the Student Committee at the school and is an active member of the movement for justice for the 43 disappeared students.

Hilda Legideño Vargas.

Hilda is a single mother of three living in Tixtla de Guerrero. She dedicates herself to making hand crafts which she sells in her community. On the 26th of September, 2014, one of her children, Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideño, was disappeared. He was a student of the Normal Raul Isidro Burgos during the events in Iguala, Guerrero.

Isidoro Vicario Aguilar

Isidoro Vicario Aguilar is the Coordinator of the Legal Department of the Tlachinollan Centre for Human Rights, where he has worked for the last 7 years. Isidoro is Indigenous Me'phaa, and a bilingual lawyer educated at the Autonomous University of Guerrero. With Tlachinollan, Isidoro has accompanied the students of the Raúl Isidro Burgos Normal School in Ayotzinapa for several years and more closely since the severe police retaliation against them in December 2011 and now for the students and parents of students missing from the events of the 26th and 27th of September 2014.

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Isidoro Vicario Aguilar est coordonnateur du Département juridique du Centre de droits humains de Tlachinollan, où il travaille depuis 7 ans. Isidoro est Me'phaa autochtone, avocat bilingue, diplômé de l'Université Autonome de Guerrero. Tlachinollan accompagne les étudiants de la Normal Rural "Raúl Isidro Burgos" d' Ayotzinapa pour plusieurs années et intégralement après les graves violations commises contre eux en Décembre 2011 et maintenant les étudiants et les parents d'élèves manquants dans les événements du 26 et 27 Septembre 2014.

Significance for Canada-Mexico Relations

Mexico is a key trading partner for Canada, with trade in 2014 totalling \$24 billion according to Statistics Canada. As a signatory to NAFTA, Mexico is Canada's 5th largest export destination. It is also a recipient of large amounts of Canadian investment, particularly in the mining sector. A report from the Commission for Dialogue with the Indigenous Peoples of Mexico - an agency of the Mexican Interior Ministry - shows that mining companies that are active in Mexico don't pay taxes, operate without environmental restrictions, and take advantage of political corruption to appropriate land and other resources from indigenous communities.

The same report concludes that Canadian companies are "without a doubt the most corrupt" of all businesses investing in the Mexican mining sector.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Development continues to list Mexico on its 'safe countries' list, a status that makes refugee claims from the country more difficult to pursue successfully. As a result, citizens in communities across Mexico caught between narco-trafficker violence, paramilitary, and, in cases like Ayotzinapa, state violence, are left with few options for survival and safety.

Links and Further Reading

Amnesty International

Mexico: Six months of frustration and failure in search for missing Ayotzinapa students

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2015/03/mexico-six-months-of-failure-in-search-for-missing-ayotzinapa-students/>

Mexico: Investigation into the enforced disappearance of 43 students is far from conclusive

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2015/01/mexico-investigation-enforced-disappearance-students-far-conclusive/>

Huffington Post

Mexico Tortured Police For Confessions In 43 Students Case: Report

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/02/mexico-torture-43-student_n_6594154.html

Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IACHR)

IACHR Makes an Urgent Call on the Mexican State Regarding the Murder and Disappearance of Students

http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2014/117.asp

The New Yorker

Crisis in Mexico: Who Is Really Responsible for the Missing Forty-three?

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/crisis-mexico-really-responsible-missing-forty-three>

Vice Magazine

The Lost Boys: A Mexican School Grapples with the Disappearance of 43 Students

https://www.vice.com/en_ca/read/the-lost-boys-0000543-v22n1

Everything You Need to Know About the Disappearance of 43 Students That's Threatening to Tear Mexico Apart

https://www.vice.com/en_ca/read/the-case-of-43-missing-students-is-threatening-to-tear-mexico-apart-1217

The Missing 43: Mexico's Disappeared Students - Part 1

https://www.vice.com/en_ca/video/the-missing-43-mexicos-disappeared-students-part-1

Tour Links

<http://makemexicosafe.ca/ayotzinapa2ottawa>

<https://www.facebook.com/ayotzinapa2ottawa>