

A call to peaceful actions for the freedom of APPO prisoners

Committee of Family and Friends of the Disappeared, Killed, and Imprisoned People of Oaxaca (COFADAPPO)

On November 25, 2006, the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) initiated a violent attack on demonstrators in the 7th peaceful megamarch in the historic center of the city of Oaxaca. The march began at 12:00 noon at San Bartolo Coyotepec and headed for the Zócalo, the city's main plaza. The first contingents arrived at the area around the Zócalo at 3:00 p.m. PFP attacks consisting of firing teargas and projectiles at the demonstrators originated a violent confrontation between the PFP and APPO members that lasted until approximately 8:25 that night.

The streets of the Historic Center became a battlefield and a scene of brutal repression against Oaxaca's peaceful popular movement. Witnesses say that the PFP not only used anti-riot tanks, clubs, shields, stun guns, and teargas grenade launchers, but also high-power arms and that they fired directly at the people of Oaxaca.

As of Monday, November 27, 2006, 141 people arrested over the weekend have been transferred from the prisons of Miahuatlán and Tlacolula, Oax., to the maximum security prison called the Federal Readaptation Center (CEFERESO) 4 at "El Rincón, Tepic, Nayarit. Prisoners include 34 women, 107 men—bricklayers, students, accountants, lawyers, carpenters, children, businessmen, workers, and farmers. The transfer was ordered by the Oaxaca state Department of Public Safety (SSP).

As a result of the transfer, prisoners are isolated from their family members, with whom it is difficult to maintain communication. The large majority are people with very few resources, and many are indigenous people. In view of the long distances involved, travel costs are high, and there are many complications in obtaining visiting permits at CEFERESO 4 in Tepic, Nayarit. It's important to point out that the few family members who have come to visit the prisoners have been accompanied by lawyers who are needed to give them counsel, but that prison authorities have refused to allow these private defenders to enter. This constitutes a serious violation of their RIGHT TO AN ADEQUATE DEFENSE, guaranteed in our Constitution.

Yesterday, only three of the family members who have come to Nayarit have been allowed to visit prisoners. Based on their testimony, we can confirm signs of torture, such as fractured ribs and hematomas on different parts of the body. Some bear (recently performed) sutures. At Tlacolula and Miahuatlán medical attention was denied. We presume that the intention of the federal government in denying access to the other prisoners is to prevent us from obtaining evidence of their physical condition. Our impotence has led us to convoke national and international Human Rights organizations, social organizations, and the Indian peoples of the world and of Mexico to set up an encampment demanding the immediate liberation of the political prisoners of Oaxaca in the city of Tepic, Nayarit, with respect for their fundamental rights and freedom.

As of today, we are calling for three immediate national actions in defense of the prisoners of Oaxaca:

--painting the slogan "FREEDOM FOR APPO PRISONERS" on vehicles.

--hanging banners demanding their freedom in schools, universities, and public places.

--putting up posters outside the federal courts in each state that say "FREE OAXACA" (OAXACA LIBRE).

The aim of these peaceful actions is to call the attention of the people of Mexico and the world to the indiscriminate witchhunt of Oaxaca citizens.

At the same time that these actions are carried out, the COFADAPPO and non-governmental organizations are petitioning the federal government for:

-The immediate freedom of the 141 prisoners in Nayarit and the remaining prisoners in the state of Oaxaca.

-The presentation of disappeared people alive, an end to arrests, and the suspension of arrest warrants for social activists.

-An investigation conducted by the appropriate authorities into the facts surrounding the killings that have occurred since the beginning of the conflict and any negligence involved, with the purpose of determining who was responsible and trying and sentencing the guilty parties.

-The immediate ouster of the Oaxaca state governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, whose authoritarianism originated the conflict and whose refusal to step down is the cause of the violent, repressive solution to the conflict now being implemented.

-THE IMMEDIATE EXIT OF THE PFP FROM THE CITY AND STATE OF OAXACA

-The establishment of an joint commission in the federal Congress consisting of representatives and senators, which should be sent to investigate and take pertinent actions regarding the extremely serious situation of these 141 prisoners of conscience from the state of Oaxaca.

Tepic, Nayarit, November 29, 2006

COFADAPPO

Freedom for Prisoners of Conscience

OAXACA LIBRE.