

# GATO

Grupo de Apoyo y Trabajo por Oaxaca / **Oaxacan Work and Support Group**

An urgent proposal to construct relationships between communities

(a project in permanent construction)

Vancouver, Canada, Nov.-Dec. 2006

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## I.- BACKGROUND

**Updated December 2, 2006**

This initiative emerges from the tradition of international work that the CIPO-RFM (Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca – Ricardo Flores Magon) has carried through all of its existence. However, this work group is born of the current situation of State and Federal government violence against the non-violent social movement in Oaxaca, Mexico. The mass popular mobilization under attack has grown out of a school teachers strike initiated in May of this year, and calls directly for the resignation of Ulises Ruiz, the current state governor.

Communities and grassroots organizations within Oaxaca are defending their rights and demanding substantive changes while federal and state forces continue to commit violations of fundamental human rights, particularly targeting those associated with the newly formed umbrella organization of Oaxacan community groups: the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO).

A quote of some of the most recent reported statistics of brutal repression by federal, state, and paramilitary police in Oaxaca:

Since June, 2006:                   over 500 arrested

Just since October 29th :       hundreds detained, hundreds injured

From August – Oct. 26th       19 detained 28 still in prison (including 3 or 4 youth)  
11 disappeared  
19 dead (including a US journalist and activist)  
39 documented cases of injured civilians (including 5 journalists)

On November 25<sup>th</sup>:               190 arrested  
3 killed (outside the Faculty of Medicine at the University)  
60+ disappeared  
140+ injured (Including 20 shot)

Dec. 2 basic update<sup>st</sup> :       All APPO leaders are hunted by federal, state, and paramilitary police; they have been forced into transient hiding – approximately half have left for Mexico City while half remain in the state of Oaxaca

Still over 100 disappeared  
100 foreigners on a wanted/hit-list by the state  
University Radio of the APPO is still down

Many of the wounded don't seek "official" medical care due to fear of reprisals, and many observers say the toll of wounded is in the hundreds. Federal police have attacked citizens in and surrounding the University Buildings in Oaxaca, where the University Radio has been transmitting live news, and paramilitary gangs are currently roving the city of Oaxaca. Most detentions have been irregular, involving illegal apprehension, a certain amount of time spent as "disappeared", consistent torture, release under bail, and fabricated charges. The aspect of psychological warfare imposed on the people of Oaxaca is not to be underestimated; people are living in a climate of fear - dealing with trauma and the unpredictable and volatile reality of the violence that has become so common.

Mexican President Vicente Fox's stated reason for sending the PFP (Federal Police) to Oaxaca was "to reestablish order". The true motivation for the arrival of the federal police and military forces, however, is to break a widespread people's movement to oust Oaxaca's corrupt, repressive and illegitimate governor and build true democracy based on social and economic justice and respect for human rights.<sup>1</sup>

In facing this situation, CIPO-RFM (a member of Zapatista-initiative *The Other Campaign* and APPO) has made a call for accompaniment of those communities, organizations and people in the Oaxacan movement who are in worst danger of persecution, (among others, CIPO-RFM itself and the indigenous members of the organization who, in June 2006, denounced the situation in Oaxaca while in Vancouver during the United Nations World Urban Forum / World Youth Forum and the civil society-organized World Peace Forum).

The CIPOVAN and others connected with Oaxaca through various means are retaking the initiative to set an international action in motion, especially now that the threats of aggression against the offices of CIPO-RFM Community house and the attacks on the University Radio have not stopped. Further detentions of representatives of the APPO and other organizations are looming closer and closer; the multiplication of arbitrary detentions, kidnappings and disappearances has risen daily. Further, the militarization of the state and the function of paramilitary gangs have also increased, while representatives of local, federal and non-Mexican governments are turning a blind eye.

Given the situation, accompaniment is necessary for all of the people in struggle in Oaxaca, encompassing those who have become part of the APPO and those who do not recognize themselves as such. CIPO-RFM is in particular need, being part of the APPO and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://oaxacasolidarity.org/> EMERGENCY DELEGATION TO OAXACA call out document

*The Other Campaign*, both of which are constantly assaulted. International accompaniment is an important way to minimize the aggressions against communities and organizations; North American involvement will not solve the complex problems in Oaxaca, however, personal accompaniment and international pressure are gravely needed at present.

The **short term focus** of this project is an urgent response to the current situation.

The **mid- to long-term focus** of this project is to strengthen CIPO-RFM and the indigenous and popular movements of Oaxaca.

Through its international contacts, CIPO-RFM is an actor who can make the project an effective international exchange, but the guarantee of its success will depend on the active participation of all involved. *There are two distinct manners of joining this effort as an international observer - either as a member of the Delegation or as a person dedicated to on-the-ground Accompaniment:*

## II. - PURPOSES

- To accompany communities, organizations and persons participating in the struggle as a form of dissuading any violence against those groups.
- To document the social, political, economic and Human Rights situation in Oaxaca
- To encourage governments to act with urgency and efficacy to stop the violence against people who are organizing non-violently
- To establish foundations for direct relationships between peoples and communities. This struggle is for social justice, recognition of the rights of communities, peace and is against political impunity, not only the avoidance of violence on the part of bad government

## III. - CHARACTERIZATION OF THE INITIATIVE

- A multidisciplinary team, cross-sectoral, diverse and professional, comprised of North American internationals who are high-profile in their work and community involvement. In the future, other delegations would hopefully include observers from outside North America.
- The team is not neutral as it will be participating in the struggle for social justice and peace; as a form of work against political impunity, it will be accompanying those who could be persecuted.

- The project will be self-financed and will depend on the observers' own monies. It will accept invitations, suggestions and proposals from the organizations with whom GATO works, but the group dynamic will be the exclusive responsibility of its members.
- The team will have the house of CIPO-RFM as its home-base in Oaxaca as well as the support of CIPO-VAN in Vancouver, Canada.

The overall functions of the team will be to:

- a) Directly accompany those communities, organizations and persons that are under threat of state aggression.
- b) Record first-hand information from events in Oaxaca, through video, interviews and research.
- c) Create informative reports for their embassies, international organizations, their own governments and the Mexican government.
- d) Create news releases for official Human Rights organizations as well as the public local, national and international levels.
- e) Visit prisoners in state jails, ex-prisoners, communities, and organizations that have been assaulted in this phase of events and/or other stages of this social movement.
- f) Coordinate with the formal representatives of the different struggles in Oaxaca so as to explore and discover the ideal methods of supporting their work.
- g) Meet with local and national authorities to solicit support for the smooth development of this work, as well as guarantees for the work the delegates will be doing; given that they (local and national authorities) are both the principally accused for the present situation of violence and also directly responsible for the security of the people.
- h) Interview the observer's own embassies and government representatives to oblige them in ensuring the delegate's security and to ensure that they (embassy and government representatives) are informed about what is happening.
- i) Create an international network of permanent support and work with the Oaxacan communities and organizations.

- j) Any other works that the international observers themselves, together with the communities and organizations they accompany, decide upon.

The group will have an executive coordination via CIPO and, while in the stage of the accompaniment in Oaxaca, all of the participants will take part in decision making.

All participants will commit to the project in its lead-up, time in Oaxaca and follow-up. The specifics of this commitment of support are left to personal initiative.

**Two distinct components of the project include:**

- 1) **Core Delegation**
- 2) **Accompaniment**

**1) The Core Delegation: *A Strategy for Creating International Political Pressure : ONE WEEK: JANUARY 3 – 10, 2007***

These members:

- Will come as a group of multidisciplinary, inter-sectoral and (preferably) high-profile international delegates.
- The specific goals are to:
  - 1) researching the situation,
  - 2) carry the message to their communities of origin and
  - 3) offer coverage at the local, national (Mexico) and international level.
- Participants need not speak Spanish. They will need a high level of focus and attention while in Oaxaca (they can't have an irregular personal schedule - being out at all hours, sleeping at any hours etc. They are expected to come with openness to flexible presence with the situation as it is.)
- Being a small organization, CIPO may not have the capacity to guide the entire delegation through every day, however, bilingual (English-Spanish) CIPO members will join the group as guides.
- The delegation will have a pre-established itinerary of government and community organization interviews, site visits, community meetings, and other research opportunities that will provide a framework for their days. All publication and organizing that happens as a result of those research activities will be independently motivated.

## 2) Accompaniment: *Critical on-the-ground Human Rights Action : Concurrent/Ongoing*

There is capacity for 7 international observers to be present at the same time. This would entail 2 people staying at the CIPO house to do the following work: monitor the radio, television, newspaper and internet; contribute to the maintenance/improvement of the house; cooking and cleaning; work in the garden; construction of a wood stove and new latrines. Five people will be serving as personal accompaniment to the CIPO members

These members:

- do not have to arrive in a group
- Can come for a variable time
- Come with the key purpose of accompanying those people at highest risk
- Have comfortable fluency in Spanish and are prepared to adapt to the life of people in Oaxaca (eating at strange hours and sleeping on mats)
- Are prepared to attend orientation to the project before going to Oaxaca
- Must be clear that their personal interests not hinder the work of the organization (the last thing the organizations needs is high maintenance North Americans who approach the solidarity work with a touristic idea of participation, or who come with the notion of taking a vacation while participating). Observers must not come expecting to be activists on the ground in Mexico. While activism (eg. protesting the Mexican government in marches, doing direct actions, etc.) is a very important mode of participating in this struggle, the approach of GATO is to apply political pressure through observation and interview-based research, and to offer protection of those persecuted via accompaniment. We are happy to help those interested in more direct forms of activism to connect with other groups who may be ready for their support.
- Longer-term projects for those in the role of accompaniment:
  - Portable video/radio project that would move from community to community in a campaign of education and diffusion of information; house improvement (in Cacalotepec); construction of wood stoves and latrines in communities; finishing the big CIPO house in Oaxaca.

**ALL PARTICIPANTS will be self-responsible, recognizing that they are entering a personally dangerous situation of violence, disappearances and state killings, and will take initiative to receive any human rights observation training or other form of self-resourcing that they feel might be necessary/helpful for their work.**

**ALL PARTICIPANTS who are staying at the CIPO house are required to follow the agreements of the house, and contribute financially to the house maintenance, water, food etc.**

#### **IV.- DELEGATION ACTIVITIES**

a) Lead-up period

- Meet with the leaders of the initiative
- Attend basic orientation to:
  - 1) the political situation in Mexico and Oaxaca
  - 2) the social movement in Oaxaca: its' participants, structural organization and allies

b) Observation period in Oaxaca

*This itinerary is currently being established by CIPO coordinators in Oaxaca*

- Site visits and interviews with members of the Oaxacan social movement, those people affected by the violence, organizations etc.
- Diplomatic contact with the observers' government of origin and the government of Mexico
- Orientation and decision making regarding the methods of on-the-ground activities in Oaxaca.
- Participate in daily evaluation and planning meetings with the group.
- Create news releases / updates to share the most salient information from their activities.

c) Final Stage: Sensitizing the home environment

- Application of political pressure through embassies, governmental representatives, media/editorial releases, work with community groups, events etc.

## V.-PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

**Points with an asterisk (\*) are relevant for those in the role of accompaniment, not necessarily those in the core delegation:**

- Committed to non-violent political action.
- Available to follow through on the activity of accompaniment/observation that they initiate.
- Able to somehow finance a part of the activity, especially transportation.
- Motivated to promote sensitization to the lived reality in Oaxaca in their own country of origin and, in some form, be involved in organizational processes.
- Willing to live without the accustomed commodities, and to adapt to the conditions of communities and organizations in Oaxaca.
- Available to travel outside of the location that has been assigned for the accompaniment, in the case that this is necessary. (For example, if the person accompanied is forced to move, the observer would have to move as well.)\*
- Equipped with basic personal tools for the mission: photo or video camera, laptop, etc.
- Comfortable in a working knowledge of Spanish (total fluency is not required, but basic functional confidence is necessary)\*
- Supported by some organization, union, school, alternative media, church, community group or group of friends. (This group of people would be emergency contacts, provide emotional support etc)
- Willing to commit to the project for a minimum of 15 days
- Respectful of the basic working methodologies and rules of operation of the project *(TO BE OUTLINED IN ORIENTATION)*

- Available to have an interview with CIPO organizers before traveling to Oaxaca. The interview is a requirement for the acceptance of an observer into the project.

## VI.- AREAS AND ITINERARY OF WORK\*

The place of work will be Oaxacan territory, particularly in those zones where the APPO is mobilized and constantly threatened by repression, even with the level of conflict present. An important part of the work will be in the Capital of the state and the near-by municipalities.

**AREAS:** places where accompaniment is most likely necessary. Emilie will confirm which of these are most prominently in need.

Region	Municipality	Local area	Observations
Valles Centrales	Oaxaca Capital	Ciudad Universitaria	
		Calicanto	
		Pueblo Nuevo	
		Brenamiel	
	Xoxocotlan	Xoxocotlan	
	Santa Lucia del Camino	Santa Lucia del Camino	
	San Jacinto Amilpas	San Jacinto Amilpas	
	Etla	Etla	
	San Antonino Castillo Velasco	Antonino Castillo Velasco	
	Atzompa	Atzompa	
	Santa Maria Coyotepec	Santa Maria Coyotepec	
	San Bartolo Coyotepec	San Bartolo Coyotepec	
Istmo			
Mixteca	Nochixtlan	Nochixtlan	
	Tlaxiaco	Tlaxiaco	
Sierra	Ixtlan	Ixtlan	

	Yaviche	Yaviche	
	Juquila Vijanos	Juquila Vijanos	
	Cotzocon	Cotzocon	
Canada	Cuicatlan	Cuicatlan	
	Huautla	Huautla	
	Cacalotepec	Cacalotepec	
Costa	Putla	Putla	
Tuxtepec			

Oaxaca is divided into 8 regions: Cañada, Costa, Istmo, Mixteca, Sierra Norte, Sierra Sur, Valles Centrales y Tuxtepec. Each region has its own municipalities. For example, the capital of the State, Oaxaca -which is on its own named a Municipality- is in the *Region de Valles Centrales* (Region of Central Valleys). Each Municipality has various areas, some known as *colonias*, others known as *agencias*, etc.

## Itinerary of Activities to Take Place

We have organized the itinerary in weeks and have only planned up until the completion of the first delegation's visit to Oaxaca. "Wk" indicates the week of the month noted.

ACTIVITIES	November 2006 – February 2007											
	wk 3 nov	wk4 nov	wk 1 dec	wk 2 dec	wk3 dec	wk4 dec	wk1 jan	wk2 jan	wk3 jan	wk4 jan	wk1 feb	wk2 feb
Promotion of the project	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
Contacts and interviews with observers	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx							
Collection of donations	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
Preparation of materials	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx				xxxx	xxxx	
Departure of a commission to prepare conditions for the arrival of observers in Oaxaca	Emilie in Oaxaca	Emilie in Oaxaca			xxxx	xxxx						
Accompaniment	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
Stay of the Delegation						xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxxxx			
Evaluation meeting of the Oaxaca-Canada coordination								xxxx	xxxxxx	xxxx		
Initiation of the second stage of the project. Definition of purposes and actions.										xxxx	xxxxxx	xxxx
Public sensitization actions in the observers' places of origin.											xxxx	xxxx

## **VII.- COMMITMENTS FROM THE INITIATORS OF THIS PROJECT**

### **To Provide:**

- Orientation and information about what is happening in Oaxaca (background, demands, actors and the current lived reality).
- Residence in a community, organization or with a particular person.
- Direct contact with the actors in the Oaxacan struggle.
- Support for observers' activities from Canada.
- Food and housing in a house of residence for the international observers.
- 24-hour internet service for work on the project.
- Space for work and coordination of activities.
- Telephone service for receiving calls 24 hours a day.

## VIII.-RISKS OF THE MISSION

This section is not intended to discourage anyone, but rather on the contrary, is intended to treat with seriousness and consciousness the importance of complying with all the methods established for ensuring our personal and group security.

It is our responsibility to notice the risks that the observers assume in entering this initiative, along with the recognition that nobody is safe insofar as we can endure hardship anywhere in the world, Oaxaca being no different.

These are some of the difficulties that we might encounter:

- The government of Mexico may impede your entry into Mexico/Oaxaca.
- The Mexican and Canadian governments may pressure observers to stop participating.
- The police may detain observers, accusing them of intervening in internal issues.
- Deportation as a consequence of active participation in the movement.
- Detention by the migratory police or another police department.
- Assault/harm by paramilitaries or police.
- Monitoring and harassment for being observers.

## **IX.- FORMS OF INVOLVEMENT**

ANY support for this project is much appreciated. Right now there is need for more people:

- To travel to Oaxaca as accompaniment or as part of the delegation
- To publicize the activities of CIPO internationally
- To find other people who can and want to go
- To provide orientation to project participants
- To raise funds
- To organize and promote events that sensitize more people to the problems in Oaxaca

All of these forms of participation are important. If you are interested in participating, please get in touch with any of our coordinators. (Note: None of the CIPO coordinators or members are paid for their work).

## X.- FINANCING

*There is an incredible need for resources of all kinds for community support in Oaxaca....  
GATO currently needs some very specific financial support:*

With the objective of maintaining autonomy from governmental support, all of the resources will be from unions, religious, philanthropic and Human Rights organizations, collectives in solidarity with Oaxaca, personal donations and events that are held as fundraisers.

The first sum of money raised will be used for the transportation of two CIPO members to travel with the delegation as English-Spanish translators and project coordinators. Other monies would then contribute to the travel costs of delegation members who most need it, and to cover the basic costs of the observers in Oaxaca: transportation, Internet, medical and judicial support, and with this, collaboration in some of the costs of local organizations, who be providing food, housing, electricity, water, telephones and Internet. Only in exceptional cases will all of the travel costs of any observer be covered.

*In no case will the donated resources be used to pay salaries or personal expenditures of the observers (such as souvenirs, personal clothing, or special food, housing or transportation).*

## XI.- COORDINATION OF THE PROJECT

For the most effective functioning of the project, we intend to have coordinators in Oaxaca and in Canada. They will be integrated in the delegation as representatives of the initiatives, in this case as Canadians and as indigenous community leaders of CIPO.

In Oaxaca: Emilie Smith and Rosario Gomez:

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Telephone in Oaxaca, Mexico: 011-52 (951)517-8183 and 011-52 (951)517-8190

In Vancouver, Canada: Sara Kendall and Raul Gatica

SARA: [kendall.ms@gmail.com](mailto:kendall.ms@gmail.com) (604) 253 9294 (English/Spanish)

RAUL: [raulgaticabautista@yahoo.ca](mailto:raulgaticabautista@yahoo.ca) (778) 862-6955 (Spanish)

CIPO website: <http://www.nodo50.org/cipo/>

CIPO-VAN website: <http://www.nodo50.org/cipo-van/>

This coordination will be provisional and subject to the voluntary service of the participants and led by the needs of the project.