

# MILITARY ARRIVES IN OAXACA

- Vancouver - October 2, 2006

Since September 30<sup>th</sup> the federal government of Mexico has been openly amassing troops in the state of Oaxaca in Southern Mexico. With the negotiations on Wednesday October 4 between the federal government and the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), the federal and state governments are doing their best to intimidate citizens into standing down from their calls for the ejection of state governor Ulises Ruiz



Ortiz, a man who took power in Oaxaca through electoral fraud in 2004. Military jets and surveillance aircraft have been flying overhead to collect intelligence on the positions of protest encampments and barricades being run by striking teachers and thousands of other residents of the state.

Since his brutal attempt to disband a teacher's strike in Oaxaca City on June 14<sup>th</sup>, using thousands of riot police and military troops and accompanied by helicopters shooting tear gas into the streets of downtown Oaxaca City, governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz has been under siege



by a mass popular movement to end his regime and seek alternative options for government. Peaceful occupations of the central area of the city as well as marches of up to half a million people, women, children and elderly included, have made the position of the citizenry of Oaxaca clear: enough is enough.

The State of Oaxaca is the second most southern state in Mexico, North-West of Chiapas, has a population of approximately 3,228,895, and is one of the poorest states in the country. Indigenous groups such as the Zapotecs and Mixtecs make up 56% of the population.

It is also known internationally as a tourist destination for its colonial architecture and beaches.

With the instability in Mexico due to accusations of electoral fraud at the federal level, people in Mexico have been out in the streets in greater and greater numbers to



call for an end to government corruption and violence. The political parties of the ruling elite, Vicente Fox's PAN (National Action Party) which will continue in power with the imposed presidency of Felipe Calderon, and the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), are now in a state of panic as they face the widespread rejection and denunciation of their governments at both the federal (PAN) and State level (PAN and PRI). The state of Oaxaca is one of the centres of this discontent and the steps that the federal and state governments take to resolve the situation through negotiation or through violent repression will be a litmus test of their ability to retain power and maintain stability in Mexico.

In a transparent attempt to shore up their power in Oaxaca, the state congress, dominated by members of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (the party that ruled Mexico for 70

years uninterrupted until 2000), recently attempted to pass a bill that would extend the 6 year term of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz to 8 years to prevent the mid-term elections from occurring amid the complete disapprobation of the electorate. A member of the PAN-PRI alliance justified this unprecedented and

**For more information:**

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completely unconstitutional move saying that as a result of the unrest in the state the conditions for an electoral process are not present. The irony of this move is not lost on the families, grandparents, women, men and children out on the street participating in the movement to reclaim their government, a right guaranteed to the people of Mexico in the constitution.

The recent militarization of Oaxaca has human rights groups around the world very worried. Using a rhetoric of stability and order, government agents are visiting businesses in Oaxaca City to inform owners that



they are intent that the government's proposals be agreed to and that the full application of the law will be pursued should the negotiations not solve the crisis. Though it is clear that the people of Oaxaca do not accept the illegal governorship of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, his removal is not an option the federal government will consider. Members of the PRI have made very clear to the PAN government that they will walk away from their temporary alliance for the status quo should he be removed.

The visits by police to intimidate business people and the mid-day fly-overs by the government are reminiscent of the psychological warfare employed by the 1970s and 1980s military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile and Guatemala. Sunday the 30<sup>th</sup> also saw reports of another mid-day kidnapping by secret police of an organizer of an activist movement at Benito Juarez University. As the man tried to escape, police shot him in the shoulder. The woman he was with was able to escape and report the disappearance (<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/02/003n1pol.php>).



As a result of this blatant intimidation, the APPO and the Education Workers Union have decided to boycott the government's forum for negotiation on the basis that it is undemocratic and coercive. The government's attempt to divide the popular movement through fear tactics is nothing new in Mexico, but the scale of the

damage, in injuries, deaths and political instability that is facing Oaxacans as their state sits on the brink of a dirty war is unheard of in Mexico.

## WHAT CAN CANADIANS AND INTERNATIONALS DO?

Just as in the case of the Zapatista rebellion, the eye of the international community must be focused on the events in Oaxaca and Mexico so that the government knows it cannot act with impunity. Taking the initiative to write emails and letters to President Fox, as well as to MP's, the Prime Minister and to the media are the means we have at our disposal to pressure the Mexican government. Here are some helpful contacts:

### Vicente Fox Quesada

Constitutional President of the United States of Mexico

Tel: (55) 59992800

Fax: (55) 52772376

[radio@presidencia.gob.mx](mailto:radio@presidencia.gob.mx)

[presidencia@gob.mx](mailto:presidencia@gob.mx)

### Members of Parliament:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/house/PostalCode.asp?Source=SM>

### Stephen Harper

[pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

Office of the Prime Minister

80 Wellington Street

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For more information about the topics covered in the article, please see the following websites:

Aerial surveillance (Spanish Language):

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/01/003n1pol.php>

Kidnapping (Spanish Language):

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/02/003n1pol.php>

Extended term for Ulises (Spanish Language):

[http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/articulos.php?id\\_sec=1&id\\_art=47313&id\\_ejemplar=1241](http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/articulos.php?id_sec=1&id_art=47313&id_ejemplar=1241)

March from Oaxaca to Mexico City (Spanish Language):

[http://www.cronica.com.mx/nota.php?id\\_notas=262557](http://www.cronica.com.mx/nota.php?id_notas=262557)

La Jornada Video:

[http://www.jornada.unam.mx:8080/ultimas/search?SearchableText=Oaxaca&portal\\_type=Google%20Video](http://www.jornada.unam.mx:8080/ultimas/search?SearchableText=Oaxaca&portal_type=Google%20Video)

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