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BY ZAIRA CORTÉS

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TRANSLATED BY
CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ
MARTORELL

Mexican Parent: 'Bring Back My Child'



José Antonio Tizapa (left), father of a disappeared student, and Miguel Castro, who organized the “Ayotzinapa 43×43” run. (Photo by Zaira Cortés via El Diario)

Fourteen years ago, José Antonio Tizapa, 4, migrated to New York from Tixtla, in the Mexican state of Guerrero, seeking to support his wife Hilda Legideño and three kids – among them, Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideño, one of the 43 students who disappeared in Iguala.

Today, anguished by the absence of news about his son, José Antonio remembers that even though he left him when he was only 5, they were able to remain connected thanks to technology. In spite of the distance they were very close, says the heartbroken dad. Their last conversation was on Sept. 23, three days before the attack on the students.

“I like to run, so I sent him some pictures, telling him: Son, I’m going to run this 5-mile section. Back then there was a marathon coming up,” said Tizapa to El Diario. “I told him: ‘When I’m done, I will send you pictures.’”

On the night of Sept. 26, the students of the teachers school, Escuela Normal Rural Raúl Isidro Burgos (Raúl Isidro Burgos Normal Rural School) of Ayotzinapa, tried to board three buses in that city near Iguala. They were going to a demonstration

against the lack of funds to cover the boarding school – among other demands – when local police officers and alleged criminal groups opened fire.

“On that night, I sent him a message, but he didn’t respond. Afterward, my daughter called me to tell me about the attack. That’s when we began to worry about the kids,” said Tizapa. “I felt powerless because I couldn’t do anything about it.”

The father added, firmly: “I want them to send my child back.”

José Antonio, a plumber who lives in Brooklyn, pointed out the fierce determination of his wife Hilda, who, thanks to the help of nongovernmental organizations, went to the United Nations office in Geneva, Switzerland, last February.

She asked the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to investigate the ex-governor of Guerrero, Ángel Aguirre, and exposed the negligence and apathy of the Mexican government in prosecuting José Luís Abarca, ex-mayor of Iguala.

“My child’s mother is the one who is there standing up for justice,” said José Antonio. “The impunity of the powerful is just incomprehensible. They, like us, have blood; they have children. Then why so much cruelty?”

Tizapa said that his son, who turned 20 on Jan. 11, was hesitating between studying at a school in the state of Mexico, or staying in Ayotzinapa.

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“I want them to bring back my child. Many people say that the kids are dead, but we do not see it this way,” said the anguished father, who pointed out that the students were neither activists or opponents. “The Ayotzinapa school does not receive enough subsidies, that’s what prompted them to put pressure on the government,” he said.

José Antonio, who has been a marathon runner for four years, participated last Sunday in the run “Ayotzinapa 43×43” led by Mexican athlete Miguel Castro. The father, who hopes to run again for the 43 students in the near future, has also participated in many demonstrations organized in New York in solidarity with the struggle of his wife Hilda and other Guerrero parents.

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Felipe de la Cruz Sandoval, teacher of the Raúl Isidro Burgos Normal Rural School and survivor of the Sept. 26 attack, is in New York to attend Amnesty International’s Annual General Meeting, which will take place in Brooklyn on March 20-22. Also participating as speaker will be Vidulfo Rosales Sierra, lawyer of the Human Rights Centre in Tlachinollan, Guerrero.

Cruz Sandoval announced on Tuesday, during a press conference in front of the New York Mexican Consulate, that the caravan of relatives and colleagues of the Ayotzinapa victims, which on Monday started a three-week tour of 43 U.S. cities, will make a stop in the Big Apple.

“It is important that both U.S. citizens and government officials of other countries are aware of the injustices in Mexico, and that the international community see what is the globalization of repression,” said Sandoval in a press release.

It is expected that the caravan will arrive in New York on March 20.