

March in NY for the appearance of the 43 normalistas of Ayotzinapa, on its fifth anniversary

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At the beginning of the march on September 26, 2019 in front of the UN in New York, the CNI-CIG councilor, Betina Cruz recounts the five years that have passed since the disappearance of the 43 Normalistas of Ayotzinapa. Next to her is Antonio Tizapa. Photo: Malú Huacuja del Toro.

Marco Vinicio González
Reporter / Editor of Online News
Bilingual Radio

It is September 26, 2019 and the events take place in front of the United Nations building in New York City. That day the fifth anniversary of the forced disappearance of 43 Ayotzinapa normalistas was commemorated in Mexico and abroad.

The day before Antonio Tizapa held a vigil, as he has done every year since 2015 in front of the Mexican consulate in New York. On the 26th there was a march to the UN, and back to the consulate, concluding in Times Square, that nuralgic intersection of the city for the millions of people who cross the square daily.

“Five years after the disappearance of our children, and here we stand,” Antonio Tizapa, father of one of the 43 Ayotzinapa normalists disappeared on the fateful night of September 26, 2014 in Iguala, Guerrero, said on the microphone. About two hundred people of collective followers and supporters listen to him attentively. Two councilors of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) and the Indigenous Government Council have traveled here in solidarity with Tizapa. One from Oaxaca, and another indigenous Chiaque from Chiapas, who lives in Boston, Massachusetts and is the first migrant councilor of the CNI-CIG abroad.



Antonio Tizapa, father of Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideño, disappeared on the night of September 26, 2014, carries a sign with the photo of his son and a banner while a young speaker carries a message of solidarity from a square in front of the one group of internationalists. Photo: MVG

To all those gathered there, Tizapa thanked them “for being here and walking with us ... it has not been easy ...”, and in a turn full of tenderness, with a broken voice he said: “My telephone number has always been the same, because I hope to receive a message from my son tomorrow. Wherever you are, you and your classmates, look !, look at the number of people who have been in solidarity with your dads and moms,” as he pointed his finger, referring to those present, but also and above all to the thousands of groups and individuals who have intermittently sustained this cause in many parts of the world during these last years.

“And after much research, it is known, independently, then, that the government has hid facts and invented fantastic stories

to make national and international public opinion, and especially of the fathers and mothers of Ayotzinapa, that their children were cremated there, in the Cocula garbage dump,” as the former Attorney General in Mexico, José Murillo Karam, author of the famous “Historic Truth,” said in due course.

Through a megaphone the recognized leader for the rights of indigenous peoples, Betina Cruz Velázquez, indigenous Binni'zaa of Oaxaca, former political prisoner and now councilor of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) and member of the Indigenous Council of Government (CIG), who traveled to New York to sympathize with the cause of Antonio Tizapa; and remember that these independent investigations “have reliably demonstrated that the boys were disappeared by the Army, and that municipal police also participated in their disappearance... So, with these elements we can definitely say that it was a forced disappearance.”

The people gathered in the park in front of the UN are mostly Mexican immigrants, and their children, many of them born in this country and based in and around New York City. They listen attentively to the words of the speakers who take the microphone to share their analysis of what has been 5 years of uncertainty



Betina Cruz and Ramiro Velázquez, both councilors of the CNI-CIG, and in the background Antonio Tizapa with the megaphone, through central streets of New York during the 5th anniversary of the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa normalistas. Photo: MVG



At the Mexican Consulate in NY, protesters make a stop to listen to the speakers' speeches.
Photo: Malú Huacuja del Toro.

and pain, for the fathers and mothers and relatives of the disappeared normalists, who have marked a before and after in the most recent history of Mexico and who have also been the stone in the shoe of the federal government.

The cause of the disappearance of tens of thousands in Mexico, and in particular that of the 43 of Ayotzinapa who have become an emblem of struggle, and blame is Mexico's serious human rights crisis, while it is a challenge for the new government in the search for the missing.

"It was a crime of state," Betina Cruz affirms emphatically, microphone in hand. She is also the leader of the Assembly of Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Defense of the Earth and the Territory (APIIDTT) in Oaxaca, "where the native peoples are currently in resistance against the mega-projects of wind farms that are displacing peasants and other farmers alike from their territories, destroying in their wake the ancestral forms of life" says a statement from Antonio Tizapa. And Betina also claims to be against the construction of the Mayan Train.

Tizapa, for his part, is an immigrant worker who gained notoriety mainly because he formed a group of international marathon runners who wear T-shirts with photos and references to the disappearance of the 43 students. He is a strong critic of the Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Amlo), because he says that the representative shows no sign of wanting to investigate the military of the 27th Mexican Army Infantry Battalion in Iguala.

During the march he told Latin News that when Amlo was a presidential candidate he personally promised Tizapa that he would investigate the Army archives in Iguala, to try to find clues that would lead them to clarify the facts.

“What he told me is that it was the military who took our children ... and of course, to have the military investigated, they have a lot to do with this.”

Tizapa refers to the military of the 27th Battalion in Iguala, from where several phone calls from some of the 43 students kidnapped on the bus were recorded via satellite tracking, according to research by the GIEI (Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts). That battalion is certainly the same one that persecuted Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas in their time. However, recently the 4T government implicitly accepted that it would still the Army.



On the left, Antonio Tizapa with the microphone, Betina Cruz in the center and Ramiro Vázquez, the Mexican Consulate in New York behind them. Photo: MVG

In spite of everything, since the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador took possession and the Fourth Transformation came into force (4T), the investigation into the Ayotzinapa case was reopened and a special commission was formed involving parents of the 43; civil society groups or international figures; Some of the experts of the GIEI returned, as well as other forensic anthropologists, and the promise of getting to the bottom of the investigation was raised. And on this 5th anniversary, a detailed report of the progress and next steps was presented. The commission that issued the report is headed by Alejandro Encinas, undersecretary of the Interior in Mexico, in the area of Human Rights, who on this fifth anniversary declared:

“We have come to the conclusion that in the case of the Ayotzinapa boys, the only truth so far is that there is no truth whatsoever.”

Nevertheless, yes there are truths. Like the Army’s involvement. It’s a fact, a truth.

Antonio Tizapa says he does not understand how it is that the Mexican government recently released 24 former municipal policemen involved in the disappearance of young normalists. “We never imagined that they were releasing people responsible for the disappearance of our children,” he deplored.

It is worth noting that the order to release these police officers was from a federal judge in Tamaulipas, a Mexican state with one of the highest homicide and femicide rates in the country, in addition to the kidnapping and trafficking of migrants. The released municipal police were involved in the disappearance of the 43 students of the normal in Ayotzinapa. And Alejandro Encinas, the deputy attorney for Human Rights called the resolution “mockery, an affront to the victims and parents that shows the misery of the Justice System in the country.”



The marche continued through the central streets of the city of New York, to demand the government the appearance with life of the 43 normalists of Ayotzinapa. Photo: MVG

However Betina Cruz is emphatic: “What’s more, what I see now is that people are being released who are involved in the disappearance, right? Recently one came out called ‘El Gil’ ... he had many related numbers and calls on his cell phone ... and another 23 were going to leave the prison.

Betina also said that no state that is presumed democratic can continue with these disappearance practices. “Mexico is a country that is not at war, but has more than 43 thousand missing. And also murdered ... it has more murdered than Syria. In Mexico there is a war against the people, there is a war against decolonizing thought; there is a war against the indigenous, there is a war against the poor. And part of that war is also that year after year thousands of our countrymen and the Central American countrymen have to cross the United States border, to get here, to look for a job. ”



During the march, from the Mexican Consulate to Times Square.
Photo: Malú Huacuja del Toro

And she sent a message to those gathered there, and others who read this: “Last September 6, 7 and 8 we had a meeting in Juchitán, Oaxaca, where the National Indigenous Congress (CNI), the Indigenous Government Council, the networks of resistance and rebellion and other groups agreed to join this campaign. To this global action for the live presentation of Ayotzinapa students, and the thousands more missing in Mexico. That is why today we are present here in New York City, to accompany them. ”

Peña Nieto, the former Attorney General, Jesús Murillo Karam, the former governor of Guerrero, Ángel Aguirre, are involved. And decried the slowness of the government, bureaucracy, “and even now, five years already, and from the very beginning he - Amlo - promised that they would accelerate the investigation; It is almost a year since he entered and there is nothing.”

Betina added to be sure that the government was responsible for the disappearance of the boys. That the former president Enrique

Betina is right, remember that on the same day of the interview with her, Alejandro Encinas said to the press in Mexico: “The only truth so far, is that there is no truth.”

And if the obstacle is the Army, Betina affirms that Amlo is the president of Mexico and that if he wanted to, in an investigation like this, he has the power as President to demand all the required tests, and they have to be turned over to the investigators. “And I think that with more force we would have to investigate the federal, state and local police, the former governors and officials, but especially the Army.”

And you, how do you see it, do you think he will investigate the army? -we asked. “Hahaha. Look, many things that Andrés Manuel promised, they just haven’t been fulfilled ... That’s why we have to keep demanding. ”

Tizapa said for his part not to lose hope and face his struggle every day with optimism, although sometimes it is difficult to overcome the sadness and despair of knowing nothing. And he also hopes that what is said by the current government of Mexico is true, of having the will

to get to the bottom of the investigation. “I hope for the intention, but with facts! Because from the saying to the fact, there’s a way to go. ”

And he pointed out that in Mexico, especially the mothers and fathers of the disappeared normalistas, it is not that they were supporting Amlo in his campaign, but that they simply asked him to commit to the appearance of the boys.

“What follows is not resting, as we have done for five years. I would not like to be here, marching for the disappearance of my son and his companions, but marching but for other causes such as against the impunity we have in Mexico. Because it is not only about the disappearance of our children but there are thousands and thousands of disappeared, where it’s not only the military but also the navy, the military and police at all levels are disappearing our Mexican brothers, and Central Americans, in the border area of southern Mexico.

And he thanked Betina Cruz and the CNI-CIG delegates who traveled from Oaxaca, and Ramiro Velázquez, a Chiapas indigenous leader who lives in Boston, Massachusetts and is the first indigenous migrant councilor abroad.



Laying of photos of the 43 normalistas on the floor of Times Square. Photo: Francisco