

Mexico's teachers face more repression, win more support

July 5, 2016

Support for resistance to the current model of education reform in México continues to grow after the Mexican Secretary of the Interior, Osorio Chong, issued an ultimatum on Friday, July 1st, to Oaxacan protesters and members of Section 22 of SNTE, urging them to stop their blockade of highways. Chong said, "time had run out" and that the state would shortly "take measures to allow for transit and provisions to get through." Indigenous authorities from la Mixteca in the state of Oaxaca jointly affirmed their continued support of protestors resisting the reform, stating they rejected Chong's ultimatum and the 'repressive stance taken by federal and state officials against Section 22 and the parents.' Adriana Marcelina Linares Arroyo, parent leader of Oaxaca's state Committee of Mothers, Fathers and Guardians in Defense of Public Education (Coordinadora Estatal de Madres, Padres y Tutores en Defensa de la Educación Pública), publicly stated her group's support for the blockades, arguing that there was no need for transnational food purveyors to deliver food to the area. Linares Arroya pointed out that the Oaxacan people had their own food, such as eggs from chickens raised by families and atole (cornflour drink). She said this food was healthier and safer than the often spoiled milk and other unhealthy foods supplied by Soriana and Aurora, two major food store chains in México. Oaxacans flooded social media with photographs of fully-stocked fruit and vegetable stands and other food items in indigenous markets in the area, further refuting government claims that there were food shortages because of the protestors highway blockades.

In addition to Chong's ultimatum, the tragic events of the past weeks, especially the armed attack on civilians in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca that resulted in the death of 9 individuals at the hands of federal and state police, have mobilized more actors in the resistance. Jalisco-based organizations called for a protest of Secretary of Education, Aurelio Nuño's, visit to their state this past Monday, July 4th. On this same day, the CNTE began a national 72-hour period of struggle that will include highway blockades and a march for the nation's teachers in México City on Tuesday, July 5th. México City teachers have declared a general strike beginning Tuesday, July 5th that will continue indefinitely, a Wednesday, July 6th national sit-in, and departure of a motorized caravan from México City to Nochixtlán, Oaxaca to denounce the crimes against humanity committed on June 19th as well as to deliver food and other goods. On Thursday, July 7th, the Democratic Movement of Workers in Education of Guanajuato (MDTEG) have called for a 4 pm demonstration; Ciudad de Libres in the state of Puebla will hold a dialogue on education and organizers in the state of México will hold planning sessions for the July 16th march scheduled there. Mobilizations are scheduled until the end of July; a meeting with the Mexican Attorney General's Office to demand the presentation with life of the 43 forcibly disappeared education students and protests in the states of Michoacán, Veracruz, and Guerrero are scheduled. In August, there will be a mega-mobilization across the nation. Professor at the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM), author, attorney, and outspoken critic of the education reform, John Ackerman, recently pointed to the limits of using state force in this process, "Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong's threats...about the imminent use of force to end with the teacher's movement, are no more than barks of the proverbial dog that cannot bite. A new violent repression against the teachers' movement will not extinguish the flame of the resistance, but instead ignite the prairie of indignation in all México. The only way to resolve this conflict is through dialogue and negotiation."

CNTE has been the key node in organizing resistance to this current U.S. style of corporate

education reform in México since 2013. Prior to the July 12, 2013 public dissemination of CNTE's official position of opposition to the reform, the then leader of SNTE, the politically co-opted Elba Esther Gordillo, surprisingly announced in December of 2012 that there would be "a peaceful and civilized resistance" to the reform. She was incarcerated two short months later. Though the charges of money laundering and diversion of funds were real, her arrest was, nonetheless, the public performance of presidential power—the message was clear: Education reform is a state matter

By Marta Sanchez, Assistant Professor Social Foundation, Donald R. Watson College of Education, first published at www.teachersolidarity.com

University of North Carolina, Wilmington