

Mexico's President Sheinbaum gives greater power to military after troops massacre migrants

Andrea Lobo
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Couched in technocratic language, the security plan presented on October 8 by Mexican President, Claudia Sheinbaum backed the military's role as a powerful and unaccountable instrument of repression. This is a continuation of the policies of her predecessor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).

At a press conference with her secretary of security Omar García Harfuch, Sheinbaum vowed to crack down on drug cartels by "consolidating the National Guard," a branch of the military, building up the intelligence apparatus and "coordinating" the activities of state police forces and prosecutor's offices with the military.

Widely cited estimates by analyst David Saucedo say that the plan will require a doubling of security spending from the already massive 6 percent of gross domestic product. This follows a more than doubling of military spending under López Obrador.

The following day, secretary of National Defense Ricardo Trevilla Trejo reported that Sheinbaum had ordered him to review US-Mexico security cooperation agreements, "to continue, update and reinforce our actions."

Echoing López Obrador, Sheinbaum paid lip service to addressing the root causes of crime and defending democratic rights.

Sheinbaum's revamping of the militarized "security strategy" under AMLO, who oversaw a record of nearly 200,000 homicides during his term, flows from the government's defense of the interests of the Mexican bourgeoisie.

A stronger military and greater subservience to imperialism are specifically aimed at defending the present social order characterized by massive levels of social inequality—the top 10 percent own 80 percent of wealth in Mexico—that make dictatorship and all forms of social disfunction like crime inevitable. This is not to speak of the widely documented ties between the military and cartels.

García Harfuch, who is being groomed for an even higher position, himself embodies the real character of the Mexican capitalist state under the ruling Morena party or any other. A member of an old bourgeois family, he is a police official trained in the US by the DEA, FBI and in a Harvard program.

He rose up the ranks under his predecessor Genaro García Luna, who is in a New York prison for accepting millions from the Sinaloa Cartel.

As chief of the Federal Police in Guerrero at the time, García Harfuch participated in the cover up and possibly the actual operation in which the 43 teaching student protesters from Ayotzinapa went missing in 2014 in that state.

These ties to mass repression make his family background highly relevant. His father, Javier García Paniagua, led the Federal Security Agency during the "Dirty War" of the 1960s and 1970s, while his grandfather, Marcelino García Barragán was the secretary of National Defense who ordered the Tlatelolco Massacre of hundreds of students in Mexico City in 1968—the anniversary of which the Ayotzinapa victims were commemorating the day of their disappearance.

In August, judge Karla María Macías Lovera, head of the Ninth District Court in Irapuato, Guanajuato, ruled that the military had perpetrated "crimes against humanity" and "state terrorism" during the dirty war against leftist organizations in the 1970s. The trial unearthed for the first time records held by the military documenting how about 1,500 people were thrown from airplanes into the ocean after being subjected to forced disappearances, torture and executions. Similar "death flights" were used by US-backed fascist dictatorships across Latin America.

Sheinbaum is going out of her way to assure the Mexican ruling class and imperialism that the Mexican military will be ready again to crush any resistance from below to inequality and capitalist exploitation.

On her inauguration day, October 1, six migrants were massacred by the Mexican military, which shot at a truck with 33 migrants inside in the southern state of Chiapas after it reportedly drove past a checkpoint. Ten others were injured, with at least one in critical condition fighting for her life.

Five of the victims have been identified: Badie Makram Fahmi (17, Egypt), Eriny Saad Salah Melek Gerges (11, Egypt), Selvia Saad Salah Melek Gerges (18, Egypt), Warner Jonathan Miranda Cueva (29, Peru), and José Modesto Méndez Funes (57, El Salvador).

Initially, Mexican authorities insisted that the sixth victim was Honduran, which was denied by the Honduran government, while the Salvadoran authorities report that two of the dead were Salvadoran, including another 17-year-old. This means that half of those killed were minors.

Sheinbaum first talked about the case during her morning press conference on October 3, making empty promises of a proper investigation, which remains *de facto* in the hands of the military. This is the same institution that kept silent about the death flights for decades and continues to hide what happened to the Ayotzinapa students.

That same afternoon, Sheinbaum attended an unprecedented “Salutation” ceremony where the Armed Forces swore loyalty and she inspected the troops from the back of a truck between the heads of the Army and the Navy, like some tin-pot dictator.

In her speech, standing next to García Harfuch, Sheinbaum said, “This is the first time Mexico has had a female Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces,” implying her gender promised greater respect for human rights.

With the migrants’ blood barely dry, she had the audacity to conclude: “In our country, there are no states of exception; there are no human rights violations.”

The main use of the military under López Obrador was to help implement different versions of the “Remain in Mexico” program at the behest of the Trump and Biden administrations.

US detention of migrants at the border has dropped 66 percent since December primarily because of the crackdown in Mexico.

The Biden administration has instituted the mandatory use of the mobile app CBP One to request appointments at US ports of entry, a measure described widely by experts as another asylum ban.

People are forced to wait in Mexico, according to an Amnesty International report, under conditions that have “become increasingly dangerous for people seeking asylum who are often extorted, kidnapped, and experience discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence by both state and non-state actors.”

It is an apparent contradiction that the process of global economic integration that has formed links between workers across the region and internationally through the process of production and new communication technologies, has been accompanied by a hardening of borders and attacks on migrants.

Migrants who manage to reach the US will be the first to recognize the hardships faced by workers and that the “American dream” is exactly that. However, even as disparities fall between workers living in advanced economies and those in the so-called “third world,” migration has only reached new heights.

Even though hundreds of millions of people in countries of belated development have been employed in advanced industries and mass services in cities in the past five decades,

even more people in these countries have fallen into informality, unemployment, and utter misery, with millions forced to flee the consequences of imperialist-backed coups and dictatorships installed to crush the threat of social revolution.

Globalization has also intensified the drive by imperialist powers in the US and Europe to recolonize through war and aggression every region of the planet, provoking further humanitarian crises and displacement. The effects of global warming caused by capitalism are another major contributor to migration.

In the advanced countries, the growth of global finance capital has undermined the social basis of bourgeois democracy by fueling social inequality, along with the further transformation of the trade unions into direct arms of management and the waging of unpopular wars. Trump’s deranged fascist agitation against migrants and threats to install a dictatorship are merely symptoms of the same disease affecting all capitalist parties.

In Mexico, the ruling elite has responded to globalization by prioritizing “competitiveness” to attract capital by offering cheap labor, deregulation, privatizations and social cuts. The “leftist” López Obrador and now Sheinbaum have been no exception, and the onslaught against migrants sets the stage for mass repression against all workers.

The lack of an organized opposition in the Mexican working class to the attacks on migrant workers and the overall militarization of society is an indictment of the leadership of what passes for the “left” and the “labor movement,” which have joined or otherwise promote illusions in Morena.

As in other semi-colonial countries, Mexico’s working class cannot rely on any section of the capitalist class to achieve genuine democracy and overthrow imperialist oppression.

Workers across North, Central and South America must instead unite in an international political movement to overthrow the capitalist nation states and establish world socialism. This requires defending the right of all workers to live wherever they choose with full rights and without discrimination.



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