

Families of 42 Killed in Mexico Plead for Justice



Mexico City, August 23 (RHC)-- Relatives of the dozens of victims killed in a massacre at the hands of Mexican federal police in the state of Michoacan last year are renewing their appeals for justice after the release of a scathing report that concluded that 22 of the murders were tantamount to “arbitrary executions.”

La Jornada reports that the revelations only confirmed what the families suspected all along. “We already knew it all,” Francisco Javier Magallon, father of one of the 42 victims killed at a ranch in the town of Tanhuato in May 2015, told La Jornada after learning of the investigation's findings. The official version, he added, was merely a “lie” to cover up police misconduct.

“Now we demand justice, that the police pay for what they did,” he continued. “It wasn’t some little animals they killed.” Magallon’s son Francisco Daniel was working as a farm laborer on the ranch where federal police launched an ambush operation to target alleged members of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, killing 42.

According to a report released last week by Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission or CNDH, police “arbitrarily” killed at least 22, tortured at least three, burned at least two, and planted guns on several more victims in attempts to frame the incident as a violent shootout. Family members have claimed at least 11 were tortured.

Magallon told La Jornada that his son's body was covered in bruises and had a knife wound in the leg. "They tortured my son to death," he said, adding that Francisco Daniel's clothes were clean and free of bloodstains, suggesting the victims were undressed before they were beaten and their clothing was put back on after they were dead.

Family members of the victims, mostly from the western state of Jalisco bordering Michoacan, claim that no one sought them out to share the conclusions of the CNDH report, nor have they received legal support to aid them in working to see the recommendations of the 700-page document realized, according to the Executive Commission of Attention to Victims.

Survivors from the attack have argued that the federal government is downplaying the severity of the massacre, La Jornada reported. One witness claimed the actual death toll was likely higher than 42 and that the police killed the victims "in cold blood," not during a standoff as authorities claimed.

The CNDH report argued that the massacre as a result of the raid in Tanhuato marks one of the country's most violent incidents at the hands of security forces in the bloody U.S.-backed war on drugs, widely criticized as a failure that has produced an escalation of violence and state-sanctioned human rights abuses.

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