

Entire Mexican police force in Michoacan arrested over candidate killing



Mexico City, June 26 (RHC)-- In an unprecedented move, all 28 members of the Ocampo municipal police force in Mexico's Michoacan state have been arrested on suspicion to the connection of the Thursday murder of one of the municipality's mayoral candidates.

The entire Ocampo police force was stripped of its weapons and held for questioning by the secretary of public security (SSP) for possibly violating the police code of conduct, according to a statement by state authorities. National media only elaborated to say that the police force failed to obey the Michoacan state police director, Venancio Colin Mendoza.

Over the weekend, public security tried to detain the Ocampo police director, Oscar Gonzalez Garcia, on suspicion of his complicity in the killing of Fernando Angeles Juarez, an Ocampo mayoral contender who was shot and killed on June 21st.

State authorities attempting to arrest Garcia were blocked by the 27 police officers under his direction, according to Sin Embargo. By Sunday morning, all of Ocampo's police department, including Garcia, had been taken in for questioning by the internal investigation branch of the SSP.

Juarez, who was running on the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) ticket, and his wife, were shot dead as they left their Michoacan hotel in the run-up to the country's July 1st general elections. Juarez also supported the centrist coalition, For Michoacan in Front.

On Sunday, July 1st, Mexico will decide its next president, as well as hundreds of other federal, state and municipal posts.

Juarez's death brings the number of Mexican political candidates and pre-candidates murdered since September 2017 to 121, making this the most violent electoral cycle in the country's history.

The fact that an entire municipal police force is being questioned for its potential links to a candidature killing is nearly unprecedented. It is one of the few arrests made so far in relation to the rash of these political homicides Mexico has experienced over the past several months, which are accelerating as the election nears.

When the number of political killings hit 82 in early April, no arrest had been made in connection to their deaths. The rarity of the apprehensions prompted national journalist Joaquin Lopez-Doriga to tweet: "It's no joke. They detained the entire police force of Ocampo, Michoacan."

Mexico has an extensive track record of violence and impunity. According to the think tank, Zero Impunity, 80 percent of Mexico's homicides go unsolved.

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