

Oaxaca/Brad Will
BACKGROUND:

In May, 2006, 10s of thousands of teachers went on strike in Oaxaca, Mexico, in a ritual that had been carried out for better wages and working conditions annually for over 20 years. They occupied the town square of the provincial capital. On June 14, 2006, governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, ordered police to dislodge the protestors and in the police action at least one teacher was killed. The brutality of the police actions that day galvanized a broad social movement, including most of the teachers and many from other sectors of Oaxacan society who suspended their disparate grievances and united in an effort to force the Governor, seen by most as fraudulently elected, corrupt and repressive, to step down from office.

The Popular Movement of the People of Oaxaca (APPO) was born over the days and weeks that followed. APPO is an explicitly non-violent movement and has fought to exercise their constitutional right to change their government. Their non-violent mobilization of millions of Oaxacans has been met with repeated violence. In its preliminary report on the events that have occurred in Oaxaca as of June 2006, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) had registered 1, 211 complaints of human rights violations; 20 deaths, 11 of which were individuals who lost their lives in situations directly related to the conflict; 349 detentions and 370 people injured.

On Friday, October 27th, at least three people were killed, including New York City independent journalist Brad Will, in confrontations between the APPO and municipal police agents and individuals who are believed to belong to parapolice groups operated with the support of Governor Ruiz. Photographs exist of the believed perpetrators of Brad Will's murder; however, none of these individuals have been fully investigated or arrested. Following these events, the federal government sent the Federal Preventative Police (PFP) into Oaxaca in an operative that began on October 29th. Rather than reestablishing peace and resolving the conflict, this operative resulted in more chaos and further human rights violations, with more than 41 arbitrary detentions and two additional deaths.