



Community Struggle and Political Repression: The Case of Miguel Peralta Betanzos

This pamphlet is meant to share one of the cases of repression in the territory of so-called Mexico.

Together with its companion piece, Brothers and Sisters are you Alive? It introduces problems suffered in the community of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca, due to the introduction of political parties, the logic of democracy, and the mechanisms of control of the state.

<http://solidaridad-eloxochitlan.esplvblogs.net>



This zine was compiled from the longer pamphlet entitled:

Community Struggle and Political Repression in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón: The Case of Miguel Peralta Betanzos

This version contains only the sections about the context in Mexico and Miguel's case. His prison letters have been put into their own companion zine in an effort to make both more widely available, using less paper, and in a less cumbersome format. The original zine compiled by comrades in Mexico can be found online in many places, including the addresses below.

Produced by those in solidarity with the Community Assembly: brothers and sisters, friends and compañerxs of Miguel Peralta Betanzos

The complete or partial reproduction of this text is encouraged. Spread freely. Expand the ideas.

Solidarity and camaraderie with our imprisoned compañerxs!
Down with the prison walls!

For the destruction of the carceral society! Fire to the prisons!

For more information visit the page:
<http://solidaridad-eloxochitlan.espivblogs.net/>

Contact the compañerxs by writing to:
solidaridadelox@gmail.com

FaceBook: *Miguel Peralta Libre*

Fire to the prisons!!!

More prison writings and poetry from Miguel can be found in the companion zine "Brothers and Sisters, Are You Alive?".

Tucson, AZ, 2018

allowed to be inside the courthouse (contrary to what happened with those who came to accompany us who were located a block beneath the courthouse, as they were not allowed inside). These various peoples tried to provoke and intimidate us—our lawyers as well as my compañero prisoners and I—as we were the only ones that were allowed in the hearing. However, and in spite of listening to so many lies and observing the staged performance, our interest was focused on the interrogations, after having waited for so long for these people to come to the hearing, we could not allow them to cancel it.

I would have liked to been able to record everything that happened in the hearing; the great staging of lies, blackmail, manipulation, complicity, abuse of power and corruption that we observed for more than 11 hours. But those hours have translated to almost three years that we have lived inside this legal farce...and the years before 2014 where the history is the same, in the same court. Still, with all of the support that they have given to the witnesses to accommodate their responses, they failed to substantiate their declarations, as they are based in lies, in acts that didn't happen.

However, it is worrisome to know that it will be that same judge and that same court that will dictate the sentence. We know that at all cost, as they have done up until now, they will try to maintain our incarceration and the persecution of our compañeros.

For now, with these lines I share with you all, I share the courage to know that the country is collapsing not only for questions of nature, but because in itself, there is a rotten and decomposed system, that likes to organize pain. There isn't anything to stop their lies, their abuse...but we tell them again that we don't believe them, that we don't trust them and that we will continue struggling and resisting until they cease to exist.

Solidarity with the brotherly peoples!
Miguel Peralta Betanzos
September 2017

Community Struggle and Political Repression: The Case of Miguel Peralta Betanzos

Mexico City
2017

come armed with sticks and machetes to the courthouse. With this, their refusal to arrive was because their physical well-being was in danger; something completely false. The judge has already, in every moment, guaranteed their security and assured the necessary conditions for their presentation, such as not allowing the presence of our families in the courthouse, in spite of the hearings supposedly being public.

Finally, on September 22nd, four of the six witnesses who had been summoned came to the courthouse—the only evidence that supports the false accusations. During the course of the interrogations, the complicity that exists between the functionaries of the court and the Zepeda family was again evident. During the almost 13 hours of interrogation, it was visible that the judge is part of this game and simulation of justice. He was not present during all of the hearing. He only appeared when he had to confirm the legality and illegality of the prepared questions. That is to say, to discard the questions and not carry them out because in his opinion they were loaded and incongruous. That is also to say that this is one of the most blatant examples of corruption and influence, or the “supplying” of textbook responses. Furthermore, he was there to disrupt the hearing, to find whatever excuse to scold the defense; for example, for bringing water into the courthouse, or for their physical movements that he thought represented an insult.

On this occasion, the court clerk and the public prosecutor participated (as social representatives of the “supposed aggrieved party”). Along with the judge, these two functionaries on multiple occasions focused on the responses, trying to accommodate what the witnesses had already said, to be congruent with the ministerial declaration or to make sense of responses. Supposedly, neither the public prosecutor nor the court clerk can participate in the answers, but in our hearing it seemed that was their job. And yes, that was their designed job, not beneath the law or codes of procedure, but in the interests of the Zepeda family.

These three people—the judge, the public prosecutor and the court clerk—together with two men that didn’t identify themselves, and the bodyguards of Elisa Zepeda and the police, tried in distinct ways to cancel the hearing. It was only evident that the two unidentified men came with the witnesses and police. They too were

Denunciation of the Judicial Process of the Political Prisoners of the Assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón

With everything and amidst everything...two disasters, thousands of realities....solidarity with the brotherly peoples!

With the urgency to bring down these walls and be able to support, in whatever way...we continue!

Nearly three years ago began this process filled with irregularities, both in the penal case, as well as in the actions of the officials in charge of imparting this circus of justice. After those called judges, magistrates, public prosecutors, and court clerk, insisted and demanded the appearance of the witnesses for interrogation, on September 22nd four witnesses came to the courthouse. These four people are key in the indictment and fabricated accusations against the compañeros of the community assembly, those of us who have maintained our resistance from imprisonment and the others still persecuted by orders of apprehension.

On this occasion, the state police did not have any excuse and were forced to transport us from our prisons, to our hearing at the courthouse in Huautla, scheduled for ten in the morning. While the travel is nothing dignified or comfortable, to see the water running between the mountains reproducing community life, strengthens us. We arrived punctually at the hearing to remove the truth from the rubble of injustice.

Our first impression was the presence of a large number of state, ministerial and municipal police located both outside and inside the courthouse, as well as groups of men that work with the imposed municipal president, Elisa Zepeda. Like on the other occasions we have denounced, she has been bothered that our families and members of the community assembly accompany us to each hearing, where she and her family members who serve as witnesses had previously failed to arrive. This includes their latest strategy to justify their contempt of the multiple judicial warrants, by utilizing a paid notice in the newspaper lying again that our family members



Mexico has a long history of socio-political conflicts, the majority of which derive from the relation between politics and ethnicity. For a long time, Indigenous peoples have remained marginalized in the political arena, which only manifests itself in the electoral struggle of political parties.

The case of the community of Eloxochitlán, as is the case of many others in the country, reflects a conflict generated by the imposition of "how things must be done" and the forms that are freely chosen by the people who live them.

To provide a backdrop to the conflict that since 2010 has plagued the community, we share the following article published by Subversiones. Agencia Autónoma de comunicación, from May 13th of 2015.

and the lack of justice for our compañeros, as she has not once attended a hearing.

The people that attend the hearings, the majority adults and grandparents, never have brought a stick or machete. What they have brought are plates of food to share with the compañeros (which has been witnessed by the staff of the court themselves) and the hope that they will see their compañeros back in their homes. We demand that the lies stop and that she presents herself in court—a court protected by men contracted with firearms that circle the area trying to intimidate those in attendance. We demand that she attend with the others that have to be questioned and not stall the process any longer.

Lastly, we call on all of the people that would like to verify, and especially the media outlet that published the article, the circus the hearings have become and the lack of interest of the authorities of the court to advance on the case that keeps our compañeros imprisoned and persecuted. We invite you to see with your own eyes what is happening...

*Miguel Peralta, Prisoner in Cuicatlán
Los otros abogados
Families and Friends of the Prisoners of
Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón
July 30th, 2017*

fact that they have not fulfilled their court order has lengthened the judicial process, above all maintaining our *compañeros* imprisoned for nearly three years. Clearly, the sole purpose of these delay tactics is to tire out our *compañeros* and their families, as the hearings are scheduled more or less every two months, and we have to wait all of that time while the “witnesses” do not even present themselves, much less “legally” justify their absence.

In the last hearing on May 23rd, after the *compañeros* demanded their release in front of the judge making clear the irregularities with which the process has been carried out, he promised to do “everything in his capacity and inside of the law” to have these people present. That is to say, according to the means of limitation that already correspond to their number of absences, they would be arrested for 72 hours to ensure their presence. As on past occasions, where these arrests were supposed to be made, we again do not expect them to happen. What he also did was intimidate the relatives and friends accompanying the prisoners, making it known that for the following hearing, they did not want people present. It is important to mention that the hearings are public and it is the only manner in which some of the family members, due to their age, economic situation and distance, can see their *compañeros*. As it stands, four of them are in Ixcotel, a prison that is located more than five hours from Eloxochitlán, and one in Cuicatlán, that is three hours from the community.

It is worth mentioning that following the release of the other six *compañerxs* that were prisoners in the same case and have since left prison, Elisa Zepeda has followed in her father’s footsteps. Presenting herself as a human rights defender and currently holding the position of municipal president of Eloxochitlán, she has benefited from the presidency. She has used municipal money to pay court fees and has used municipal police to threaten family members of *compañeros* who remain with arrest warrants against them in the same case.

Furthermore, through a note she bought in the newspaper, Elisa stated: “When I have to go to the court to testify as part of the trial, an opposition group also goes with sticks and machetes intimidating me from the outside. The situation worries me dearly”. This is another lie with which she tries to justify her absence in the process

The Struggle for Autonomy in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón

Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, the birthplace of the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón, is a municipality of approximately 5,000 inhabitants located in the Cañada region of the state of Oaxaca. The municipality of Eloxochitlán, as is the case in nearly two-thirds of the municipalities in the state of Oaxaca, is governed under *usos y costumbres* or the normative system of governance of Indigenous communities.

Every three years the elections of the municipal authorities and the representatives of the various neighborhoods take place. The community is made up of 24 neighborhoods and two municipal agencies. Municipal agents are elected through the *usos y costumbres* for a one-year period; among their principal function is the representation of their agency inside the local government and to serve as advisors regarding issues of the community. The general assembly is the organ that makes decisions, which is done by means of direct voting through raised hands. The difference from other municipalities of the state of Oaxaca is that in Eloxochitlán women also participate in the making of decisions.

Political Party Interference

In the beginning of 2010—with the upcoming community elections in November of that year—political parties began to interfere in the communal process. In clear violation of the traditional forms of decision-making in the community, votes were bought and coerced, in an attempt to gain support from the community. These were just some of the actions undertaken by political parties and their representatives seeking to win the elections.

After the defeat of Eviel Pérez Magaña, PRI candidate for governor of the State under the political party coalition “Unidos por la Paz y el Progreso”, Manuel Zepeda, PRI member originally from Eloxochitlán, was taken in by the political party Convergencia to seek the municipal presidency. This was undertaken by the buying of votes and alliances made with neighborhood leaders. He tri-

umphed in the assembly in a form foreign to the traditional forms of decision-making, only receiving a third of the votes.

The nonconforming parts requested their integration into the municipal council—as is the tradition in the community, where the second and third place in the voting form part of the government with the winning candidate—but were refused integration by the elected candidate. The nonconformists turned to the general secretary of government of the state of Oaxaca (SEGEGO) and the competent authorities, from whom they did not receive a favorable response. Thus began a post-electoral conflict with the rise of the community assembly that carried out demonstrations as a means to have their traditional decision-making forms, as well as their integration into the municipal council, respected.

On December 31st of that year, and in the context of the post-electoral conflict, Eusebio Morales Alfaro, the outgoing municipal president, decided not to hand over power to Manuel Zepeda. This resulted in the closure of the municipal palace and a two-day takeover of the highway Puente de Fierro which connects the population of Teotitlán de Flores Magón and Huautla.

Due to the lack of agreement with Manuel Zepeda, and the mobilizations carried out against him lead by members of the community assembly, the SEGEGO called the factions to dialogue for a supposed integration that would bring an end to the post-electoral conflict. However, this dialogue was a setup to suffocate the movement of the assembly. The false dialogue transformed into orders of detention against members of the community assembly. Jaime Betanzos Fuentes, member of the negotiating committee, was arrested and transferred to the maximum security prison in Miahuatlán. This caused a total break with the dialogue between the community assembly and the state government.

A Repressive Government

A week after the detention of Jaime Betanzos and the ending of dialogue, a police operation was carried out by the three levels of government in the community to “reestablish order”. In this operation, illegal searches were carried out in some of the houses of members of the community assembly.

Statement Regarding the August 2nd, 2017 Court Hearing

Once again, on August 2nd, a hearing is scheduled for five of the seven prisoners of the community assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón. After two years and seven months since the judicial process began for the first detainees, we continue in the testimonial stage, where the only thing that keeps our compañeros incarcerated are the testimonies of eight people. On more than seven occasions, these people have made excuses so as not to be questioned in court, thus preventing the end of this particular stage in the case.

It is worth mentioning that some of these declarations are of people that were not in the vicinity of the events—that is to say their declarations are hearsay. Other declarations are textual copies of others, and at least six of the eight are family members and/or sympathizers with Manuel Zepeda Cortés and his daughter, Elisa Zepeda Lagunas. These two have been in charge of maintaining the judicial and political context in the Mazateca community since 2012. In spite of each one of the people having been notified, only two of them, Manuel Zepeda and his brother Vicente Zepeda, have fulfilled their questioning. This came after various forms of pressure, and was carried out the same day that they arrived in court to sign papers to be prosecuted for the crime of torture (they have gone at the end of each month for more than a year). This crime has been reclassified again to “injuries and abuse of authority” due to irregularities in the process. These processes are the result of an ambush they carried out together with others (including the husband of Elisa Zepeda) against members of the community assembly. The ambush took place on November 20th, 2012, when members of the community assembly were headed to Mexico City for a political action for the anniversary of the death of Ricardo Flores Magón.

Up until now, the other six have not appeared in court. As a result, urgent measures have been promoted such as fines for them all or their presentation in court using police force. However, the three judges that have passed through the Mixed Court of Huautla de Jiménez during this time have not enacted these measures. The

tion. We propose banners, paintings, calls to the judge of Huautla (#012363780324), political events or whatever else—something to make yourselves seen and your voices heard, that we are fed up and that we demand freedom for the political prisoners of Oaxaca and the world. We also demand a safe return to their homes, of those still being persecuted and displaced.

Finally, I want to send greetings to all of those that have been present in these two long years and a special thanks to the collective “Los Otros Abogados”, that have highlighted the mockery and cynicism of this supposed justice. Solidarity to the hunger strike of the political prisoners of Palestine in Israel, and with the Nahua and Purépecha communities of Michoacán!

Freedom to Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca
Freedom to Roque Coca and Alvaro Sebastián
Freedom to the prisoners of Tlanixco and el Amate
Freedom to Fernando Bárcenas, Luis Fernando Sotelo, Abraham Cortés
Freedom to the Prisoners in Struggle

Prisoners to the Streets
Miguel Peralta
Cuicatlán, Oaxaca
4/19/17

This however was not enough to curb the demand for the liberation of Jaime Betanzos, nor the organization of the assembly itself. For example, communal work projects known as tequios or faenas—the cleaning of streets and highways and the delimitation of territories between neighboring municipalities—among other forms of communal organization continued. On February 13, 2011, after spreading the word inviting people to the tequio of the 14th for the freedom of Betanzos, a group of approximately ten members of the community assembly were intercepted, beaten and threatened by the municipal president Manuel Zepeda, together with a violent group supported by the municipal police.

The following morning during the work of the faena, around ten members of the assembly that clean the highway to Santa Cruz, were brutally beaten by a violent group lead again by Manuel Zepeda and his son. This was carried out with the clear objective of dismantling the organization to eliminate whatever obstacle present to the government of Manuel Zepeda. A few days later, on February 25th, Jaime Betanzos was freed due to the irregularities in the process and the lack of evidence that associated him with a crime.

On the following March 20th, the community assembly again reunited with the objective to put an end to the post-electoral conflict. They asked the municipal president for the integration of the municipal council that would take into account the majority of the population. The response to their petition was repression by Manuel Zepeda and his violent group, who armed with sticks, pipes, stones and firearms, attacked members of the assembly again leaving various people injured.

Amidst this environment of uncontrolled repression and violence from the municipal president and his violent group, on April 8th a cargo truck was burned. The truck belonged to the organization Unión de Comunidades Campesinas Marginadas (UCOCAM) which was formed by members of the community assembly.

On May 30th, after returning from a tequio, members of the assembly were intercepted again by Manuel Zepeda and his violent group at the location Agua de Máscara. Genáro Gómez González, Daniel Romero Pérez, and Roberto Pineda Monfil were detained,

beaten and tortured for the simple act of being active members of the assembly. These actions were to be settled in a complaint brought to the Public Prosecutors Office and the Commission of the Joint Regional Office of Human Rights of Huautla de Jiménez. This settlement never prospered.

Plundering of Resources and Nepotism

The period in which Manuel Zepeda and his family exercised power with authoritarianism and repression, was also the period which began a change in the course of natural resources and economics of the municipality. Zepeda favored the extraction of sand, gravel and rock from the river to benefit his own businesses and those of his family. Some examples are the construction company under the name of his son-in-law, David Tello, another company of stone materials under the name of his wife, and yet another under the name of his brother, Vicente Zepeda. He also granted public positions to his family members, designating his son Manuel as director of logistics and maintenance of the community, and his daughter Elisa Zepeda as director of DIF (National System for Integral Family Development) and consultant of municipal development. Without the request for bids, he assigned projects to his own companies—a practice contrary to the traditional procedures of the town, but very similar to the manner in which political parties operate.

In June of 2011, Hurricane Beatriz battered the state of Oaxaca causing serious damage in the Sierra Mazateca and in the community of Eloxochitlán. There were dozens of victims and enormous damage to the crops and to the cattle of the community. Some members of the population thought the damage was a consequence of the extraction projects in the river, because its path was modified due to the removal of stone and sand that before served as the natural barrier of the riverbed.

After this tragedy, Civil Protection was present in the community taking stock of the damages together with the municipal president and delivering resources to help the affected families. These resources were only given to his supporters, while the members of the community assembly were excluded from the distribution.

Call for a Day of Resistance From Political Prisoner Miguel Peralta

This April 30th will mark two years of my detention and confinement. Two long years that I could narrate to you: in instants, hours, minutes, nights and days of anxiety, of impotence, of hatred of the state and its functionaries. Two long years of an everyday that wears on me, in the individualism that we are forced to reproduce (which I hate), and in the necessities and sicknesses that the prison walls generate in us. Lost time? No. Not in the company of the compas in solidarity, in daily resistance, in shared lessons. Not with the support of those that I didn't know, including those whom I don't know personally but that I know through a smile, in not forgetting to see the new sun and to dream, in the rejection of total control.

It is well known that the official justice system does not work for the people. The despotic political class makes us believe that it dispenses justice, making its reforms at its own convenience, classifying us as criminals, terrorists or enemies. It makes us another number in their statistics, trying to standardize our consciousness, decorating the archives and dusty files with new concepts (that in the end fuck you if you do not enter into their reforms). It is not enough to confirm your innocence but you furthermore must adapt to their manner of living, always submissive to them. However, inside of us, we have that drop we call freedom that will never be converted into a law, nor will ever be reformed.

As long as impunity continues to govern as it does in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, we will search ways to resist and organize ourselves, to bring down those who are believed to be untouchable, those that act as defenders of the community whom produce news with stolen money. While in the community they only feed their egos, their stories and their methods of repression, imposing themselves with threats and clubs to those that they supposedly "defend and represent"...

As part of this daily resistance, this April 30th we invite people, collectives and those who desire to join in a day of denunciation and demand for our freedom using the means of communica-

The Witch Hunt

During 2012, a witch-hunt against members of the assembly was unleashed and dozens of crimes were fabricated to justify arrest orders against them. Some fled the community while others sought protection.

Some months later, Hurricane Ernesto hit the Sierra Mazateca. While surveying the damages, members of the community assembly were ambushed by at least 30 men lead by the municipal president and accompanied by the municipal police. Without warning, they initiated an aggression against the population. This event lead to the detention of Pedro Peralta, who was held incommunicado and tortured for more than seven hours, before being transferred to the prison of Cuicatlán. He was charged with carrying a firearm meant exclusively for military use (a federal crime), carrying a firearm while belonging to an aggressive group, along with "damages and injury".

He remains imprisoned in Cuicatlán and his legal process has been plagued with irregularities. It is worth noting that the municipal policeman Feliciano Margarito Suárez, who served as commander when Pedro was detained, alleged in a report dated October 13th, that he was forced to sign the informative report, and the weapon presented in possession of Pedro Peralta was planted. The conclusions of these reports have not arrived to the eighth judge where his legal process is being carried out. These conclusions are necessary to end the process so the judge can dictate the sentence.

The judge of the mixed jurisdiction court of Huautla de Jiménez, Modesto Isaías Santiago Martinez, reclassified the crime of torture and injury against Pedro, but at the same time reactivated the arrest orders against members of the assembly. The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) never submitted the protective measures despite the evidence of torture ruled in the opinion of the Attorney General's Office. They concluded that Pedro's process violated the Istanbul Protocol.

Mobilizations for the freedom of Pedro didn't wait. Members of the community assembly began a political and media campaign to

denounce the case and demand his freedom. Social mobilizations, information in free and independent media, leaflets and paintings, are just some of the actions that were carried out to which the police responded again with repression. On November 20th, 2012, in front of a group of police, Manuel Zepeda attacked Leonides Fernández. She would not remove propaganda outside her house demanding the liberation of Pedro Peralta and naming culpable the municipal president for the violent acts that had occurred the previous months in the community.

That same night a caravan was organized to leave for Mexico City to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Ricardo Flores Magón. Before leaving, the caravan was intercepted by a violent group, municipal police, and Manuel Zepeda. Dozens were injured, including children, elderly, and the journalist Fernando Palacios. This action was reported in an alert by the organization Article 19 (dedicated to the protection and defense of journalists and the liberty of expression). It is worth mentioning that in spite of the evidence, the delegate of the Attorney General's Office in Oaxaca has not issued arrest orders against those responsible for the attack. In the following days, a human rights organization from Oaxaca submitted recommendations to the municipal president and protective measures in favor of the injured. Days after, a dialogue was initiated between the government of Oaxaca, the municipal president, and those of the community assembly who were affected.

However, this dialogue never took place, the protective measures were not considered, and justice has not been served.

The Community Assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca and Their Struggle for Autonomy

Since 2010, the community ties of Eloxochitlán have been torn by the ambition for power of the cacique Manuel Zepeda Cortés. To achieve his ends and maintain autocratic power in the municipality, he has turned to political parties, opposed to the community assembly. The assembly rather is a space of debate and decision-making in the community, where the political legitimacy of the municipality lies.

Oaxaca (IEEPCO) to challenge these acts taking stock of the inconsistencies of this election and asking for its annulment. The community assembly solicits new elections in agreement with the usos y costumbres of the Indigenous community—an election where a true majority of the people in the community participate.

However, the directors of the Electoral Institute of Citizen Participation in Oaxaca (IEEPCO) have ignored these anomalies, validating the election on July 24th, 2016, authorizing Elisa Zepeda Lagunas as municipal president. On November 1st of last year, Elisa Zepeda Lagunas was again recognized as president elect of the three-year period 2017-2019. The community assembly does not conform to these results and has put forth another complaint to the federal electoral tribunal with headquarters in Xalapa, Veracruz. Regardless, on December 30th of last year, Elisa Zepeda Lagunas was officially sworn in as municipal president. It is important to note that in the analysis of these acts, bribery prevails with the authorities co-signing the official documents. Thus, as a consequence, the municipality remains divided and in dispute, while concord and peace is negated.

*Sincerely,
Members of the Community Assembly Ricardo Flores Magón
1/20/17*

attacked them. As a result of the attack, professor and journalist Fernando Palacios Chazares and various others were gravely injured. Until now, the perpetrators remain in impunity. Manuel Zepeda Cortes also used heavy machinery in the river that runs through our municipality to remove large quantities of rock and sand from big landholdings that he obtained with municipal resources. This has generated a climate of discomfort in the municipality. Thus, the family has attempted at all costs to retain local control in our municipality, protecting their previous interests in the PRD party and now in the Morena party.

As a result of the conflict on December 14th of 2014, two people died, while automobiles and houses were damaged. For this, our compañerxs remain incarcerated or with outstanding orders of arrest. As all the necessary evidence has been presented for the relevant investigations, the judicial authorities have moved very slowly with the process, for which we ask the government to revise the advancement of the cases. Those detained and the others with orders of arrest have continually confirmed their innocence.

Manuel Zepeda Cortes manipulated the interim president Juan Salazar Hernández during the two remaining years of his period of 2014-2016, in order to organize the new elections for the three years of 2017-2019 without following the protocols of the rights of the Indigenous peoples. In doing this, he imposed his daughter Elisa Zepeda Lagunas, fulfilling his thirst for municipal power. This election was carried out on the first Sunday of April, when in the previous years it has taken place in the second week of September. Without the majority validating the election, and without taking into account other contenders, only 450 people gathered, when in past elections more than 2300 voters have participated. In the official documents, some 1400 voters are said to have participated, thus proving the falsification of signatures of citizens who weren't present. To make matters worse, Elisa Zepeda Lagunas is not originally from this municipality and doesn't speak Mazateco, whereas some 90% of the municipality does.

These acts have taken advantage of the climate of uncertainty and persecution against the members of the community assembly. The compañerxs of the community assembly registered complaints before the Electoral Institute of Citizen Participation of the State of

Because the community assembly is opposed to the personal power of the cacique and his family, the force of repression has been directed toward its participants. More than 23 of the assembly members have arrest orders, and after more than five years of conflict, more than 15 people have been incarcerated. All of these people have been criminalized for defending communal forms of electing representatives, for denouncing the embezzlement of public funds carried out by Manuel Zepeda Cortés, for preventing the imposition of the political party system in Eloxochitlán, as well as for defending their natural resources from the private interests of Manuel Zepeda and his businesses.

Manuel Zepeda Cortés (ex-municipal president) and his daughter Elisa Zepeda (current municipal president) have used their institutional power for their own wealth and privileges. The complicity of the political parties of the "left" like the Partido de la Revolución Democrática and the Partido de Trabajo are key to understanding the impunity of these actions. Without any repercussions, they have used political resources to condition the rights of the people. They have supported the military presence in the community and acts of harassment through the continuous aggression and torture carried out by violent people dressed as municipal police. These violent acts have taken place in coordination with local deputies, authorities of other entities of the country, judges, and of NGO's (Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario and la Equidad de Oaxaca, just to mention a few). These NGOs fail in their alleged purpose of defending the human rights of Indigenous women. They rather act as accomplices to the repression against the people of Eloxochitlán.

Against this long list of crimes committed by Manuel Zepeda and his violent group, legal complaints have been submitted to different judicial bodies regarding the violations of human rights. However, the response have been filled with irregularities, delays, the loss of records, reclassification of crimes, and the protection and guarding of these individuals. This is to say, justice of the state and human rights organizations are clearly on the side of those who repress the community of Eloxochitlán.

The last serious offense that took place is what brings us to the current situation. On December 14, 2014, an assembly was orga-

nized to elect the municipal authorities including the municipal mayor. This is a periodic celebration under the responsibility of the community assembly, who embodying the electoral system, discuss and decide who will be named as representatives of the people. That day, Manuel Zepeda Cortés, together with his violent group, those serving as his municipal police and who had taken the municipal presidency a month before, assaulted members of the community assembly with firearms. As a result of the attack, seven members of the community assembly were injured from bullet wounds. The others managed to arrest the leader of the attack and his son, Manuel Zepeda Lagunas, who was in possession of a firearm. He was given alive to the state police. Hours later he died under uncertain circumstances. Without proof of the crime, the Government of the State of Oaxaca and the cacique Manuel Zepeda named 35 members of the assembly, amongst them Miguel, guilty of the death of Manuel's son.

At the moment they delivered Manuel Zepeda Lagunas alive, the first seven members of the community assembly were detained in the municipality of Huautla de Jiménez; six of them municipal authorities that brought the detained Manuel Zepeda Lagunas and another that accompanied one of the injured. A year and eight months after their arrest, they remain incarcerated in the prison of Ixcotel, Oaxaca, without any resolution to their legal situation. Furthermore, to this date, there hasn't been any advance in the legal process of those who were injured by gunfire, who have directly named Manuel Zepeda, his family and followers culpable. After these detentions, a hunt was initiated against the assembly, resulting in five more being detained, four men and one woman (three in Cuicatlán, one more in Etla, and the woman in Tanivet, Oaxaca). In addition, various families have been forced to leave the community, a media campaign has been initiated based on lies, and again the Zepeda group has taken power, returning with greater intensity the climate of violence, harassment, and impunity in the community.

Three More Years of Harassment and Abuse of Power in San Antonio Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Oaxaca

After the culmination of the three- year municipal period, 2014-2016, ten compañerxs of the community assembly remain imprisoned in the penitentiaries of Ixcotel, Cuicatlán and Etla, Oaxaca. Furthermore, arrest orders remain outstanding against nineteen of our compañerxs. This is the result of a municipal conflict on December 14th, 2014, between people of the municipality, in a dispute over control of the municipal palace and the naming of the municipal mayor.

The municipal palace had been previously taken through violence by a group using sticks and firearms, lead by the professor/ brothers: Vicente, Vidal, and Manuel Zepeda Cortes (the latter being the ex-municipal president for the three years 2011-2013). Their intention was to retain power in order to hide the embezzlement of 23 million pesos carried out in complicity with the ex-municipal administrator professor Eleazar Bravo Fuentes. Their pretext for the attack was that the then municipal president, Alfredo Bolaños Pacheco, was not using the resources adequately to benefit the municipality. In reality, Manuel Zepeda Cortes ex- municipal president, sought to obscure the gifting of the money to works of his construction company, which he had started during his time as municipal president.

It is important to note that under his command, the repression and violation of the human rights of members of the community assembly who don't pertain to his political line were extensive. In February of 2011, he orchestrated the burning of a truck belonging to UCOCAM (Unión de Comunidades Campesinas Marginadas). On the 30th of the same month, Manuel Zepeda Cortes along with his followers, using sticks, rocks and machetes, attacked compañerxs of the community assembly that were carrying out a Faena (community works project) in the neighborhood of Puerto Rosete. On November 20th of 2012, as compañerxs gathered in an autobus in Puente de Fierro, to travel to Mexico City to commemorate the anniversary of the tragic death of Ricardo Flores Magón, hooded men

Note of Clarification

The peculiar thing is that after this attack and the consequences already mentioned, Manuel Zepeda and his daughter, Elisa, began a campaign of victimization in their favor. The campaign has been supported by innumerable human rights groups that, without knowing the background of the conflict, have stood up for their electoral representation in the community and have constructed a discourse around the repressors as defenders of human rights. In the case of Elisa, a defender of the rights of Indigenous women. This is completely false, but a strategy well known to win over public opinion. Anyone who is questioned inside of the community of Eloxochitlán, can testify that neither Elisa nor her father Manuel have stood up once for human rights. On the contrary, they are an integral part of the repression, theft and plundering of resources. They are the ones who have planted fear, who have brought the military into the community, who have shot at the community, who have closed the roads, and who have maintained a media and police siege against the members of the assembly that still live in the community.

On July 30th, 2015, Pedro Peralta was released after paying a fine. This did not mark the end of his judicial process, as he remains in a probational period for another year.

Statement of Pedro Peralta After His Release

After 2 years, 11 months and 17 days of unjust incarceration, we want to share with you that July 16th I received notice that I have been found guilty of the crime of carrying a weapon for exclusive military use. I say again never have I touched, seen or known such a weapon. I am sure that this verdict intends to strike a blow against our struggle as a community assembly.

Despite the sufficient evidence provided for my unconditional freedom, much of the evidence was rejected, including the statement of the municipal police commander who detained me, where he narrated the real acts, contradicting the crimes that they have attributed to me.

It is clear that my entire judicial process, like many others, was full of irregularities permitted by the corruption that exists between the judge of Huautla, the judge of Cuicatlán, the eighth circuit court of Oaxaca, together with the state of Oaxaca, Manuel Zepe-da Cortés, Eleazar Bravo Fuentes, and David Tello Delgado. Since 2011, these people have generated violence in our community. I knew that from the moment of my arrest, the struggle for my freedom was going to be complicated because the dominant justice system does not exist for the people. Rather it exists for those who have political and economic power. Because of this, I know that the people create justice. It is within the people.

I will continue to struggle for the truth as I have done during the years of my incarceration. I will continue proclaiming that during the moment of my detention I was physically and psychologically tortured by Manuel, Vicente, Vidal Zepeda Cortés, Magdalena Lagunas, Alfonso García, Wilfrido Hernández and Francisco Romero. At this moment, they illegally and illegitimately continue to hold power in our community. Despite that my torture was documented by the Fiscalía Especializada de Delitos de Trascendencia Social and by Código DH, in Oaxaca, the Mixed Judge of Huautla de

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Jiménez, again taught us that justice is bought and sold. According to him, the torture that they exercised upon me was not to obtain a confession. However, that is not the truth. In reality they tortured me to fabricate crimes against me and to generate fear in the community as many people didn't agree with their abuse of power.

My freedom is only one step in a long struggle that has been accompanied by my family, friends, collectives and people in solidarity that are against injustices and believe in the self-determination of the people. Without all of you, without your support, my freedom would not have been possible. I thank you and I call on you to continue struggling for the unconditional freedom of the other nine prisoners of the community assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón. If we do not begin to speak of justice, there will not be freedom nor the cancellation of arrest warrants.

Never Forgive, Never Forget! Freedom to all of my compañeros of the community assembly of Eloxochitlán! Freedom to the political prisoners!

-Pedro Peralta

After being incommunicado, Miguel was taken to a prison that didn't correspond to his case in the municipality of Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, while the rest of his compañerxs have been held in the prison of Ixcotel. There he wrote his first letter and since then has written small reflective pieces which we have reproduced in the companion prison letters zine.

He, like some of his incarcerated compañerxs, is considered an "Indigenous prisoner" because he belongs to a community that speaks Mazateco. This, among other things, has generated more ambiguity in his legal process. However, Miguel recognizes himself as Indigenous, as heir of the Indigenous traditions that he defends.

In regard to the judicial situation. After the Judge of Huautla de Jiménez, Oaxaca, issued the verdict on May 7th, Miguel's defense has filed two appeals to demand his freedom. Supposedly they had to resolve the appeals within three months. However, the Judge of Huautla did not allow the process to advance stopping the paperwork from being sent to the courts in the city of Oaxaca. To this date, they have deferred numerous hearings due to the failure of the Judge of Huautla to act. Because of this, we can say that his case is in permanent recess.

What follows in this section is several statements from Miguel and his supporters about more recent developments in his case and the situation in Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón.

and the Attorney General of Mexico City responsible for the physical and psychological integrity of our compañero. We demand his immediate freedom, and the clarification of the irregularities of the judicial process of Miguel Ángel Peralta Betanzos as well as the larger case of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón.

Sincerely,

*Friends, family members and collectives in
solidarity with the assembly of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón.*

At the end of October 2015, Brigida Bautista Guerrero was detained in Huautla de Jiménez, making a total of 12 prisoners and making it clear that the orders of arrest continue against an endless number of sympathizers of the assembly. The names of the 12 detained are: Brigida Bautista Guerrero, Wilfrido Salazar, Fernando Gavito, Herminio Monfil, Jaime Betanzos, Rubén Cerqueda, Omar Morales, Alfredo Bolaños, Erclio Pineda, Miguel Ángel Peralta, Eleuterio Pineda and Ismael Reyes.

Freedom to them all!

Letter From Herminio Monfil: One of Those Detained After the Events of December 14th , 2014

*To the Indigenous people of the world
To the national and international press
To the political, popular and revolutionary organizations
To the human rights bodies*

Brothers and Sisters, my word is simple and true.

When in office, Manuel Zepeda Cortes (responsible as the principal authority, as the first in charge, as the father of our community) for three years always had the same thought, always saying the same words. He never looked at the people with respect. When he was asked for a little support in the house of the people, he would quickly pride himself and return the word. He returned with words that were very hurtful:

“Do not ask me for anything. There where you gather every Sunday, there they will give you the support that you ask of me.”

He always behaved in the same manner, never coming from his heart:

“Turn around and look at me and I will receive you.”

“We work together and we are united”.

There was no change in the pride of his heart, he didn't seek to find a common bond in our hearts.

He acted like this, always saying the same thing.

If he had love for the people, he would have utilized the simple word from his heart for the people. As such, he would have been better. That is what I want to say.

*Herminio Monfil Avendaño, Ixcotel, Oaxaca
May 26th, 2015*

***Freedom to the Political Prisoners!
Down with the Prison Walls!
Peace With Justice and Dignity!***

Amidst the context reported in the investigation of Subversiones, and after the events of December 14th; on April 30th, 2015, Miguel Peralta Betanzos was detained, son of the already imprisoned Pedro Peralta and member of the recognized community assembly as well as a graduate of the National School of Anthropology and History. His arrest, opens up a lot of questions that again make clear the threads of power mobilized against members of the community assembly that defend the self-determination of the people and openly denounce tyranny and its accomplices. His close compañeros denounced the events by means of the following communiqué.

Detention of Miguel Peralta Betanzos

To the government of the state of Oaxaca

To the media

To the defenders of human rights of the people of Oaxaca

To the human rights organizations

We denounce the events of April 30th, 2015, in the center of Mexico City, that took place in the following manner: At approximately 5:30 pm, in the workplace of our compañero, individuals without identification, uniforms or arrest warrants, tried to detain him. The people around witnessing the act stopped the detention. Miguel Peralta, was protected in a local store, while the same individuals were questioned by people in the vicinity. Since the detention of Miguel Ángel Peralta Betanzos was blocked, the three individuals identified themselves as police of the state of Oaxaca. They called for backup of approximately thirty Mexico City police, who violently entered the store, destroying it and threatening the people inside. Miguel Ángel Peralta Betanzos was kidnapped and was forced into a private car with plate number 237UMY, headed in an unknown direction. This was the last time they had contact with Miguel. Several hours passed without the knowledge of his whereabouts—not in an Attorney General's office, nor a hospital.

They only knew of the situation through an article at www.fotos-noticias.com, where they manipulated the information against our compañero.

We name the ex-president of Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, Manuel Zepeda Cortés, along with the State Agency of Investigation