

Ayotzinapa protesters knock down door of Mexico's presidential palace

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Mexico City, March 6 (RHC)-- A group of protesters have knocked down a door to Mexico's presidential palace during a demonstration to demand justice for the 43 student teachers who disappeared in 2014.

Footage shared on Wednesday by local television stations showed a few dozen protesters using a pick-up truck to smash open an entrance to the National Palace, while President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador was holding a news conference inside.

Police used tear gas to disperse the group, according to newspaper El Universal, which said law enforcement had erected barriers within the palace to stop the protesters from entering.

Lopez Obrador described the incident as a “very clear plan of provocation.” “They would like us to respond violently. We’re not going to do it. We’re not repressors,” he told reporters, adding: “The door will be fixed, and there’s no problem.”

The case of the missing students, however, is one that has continued to shake the country. Relatives and supporters have staged various protests in Mexico City, demanding answers about what happened to their loved ones and calling for those responsible to be held accountable.

The students — known as the Ayotzinapa 43 — hailed from Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers’ College in the southern state of Guerrero.

They went missing in September 2014 after they commandeered buses as part of an annual tradition to drive to Mexico City to mark the 1968 Tlatelolco student massacre.

But they were intercepted by police — and what happened next remains murky.

Mexican authorities have speculated that the students were turned over to local cartels associated with the police and military, and subsequently murdered. Some charred bone fragments have been recovered and matched through DNA to three of the missing students. The rest of the bodies, however, have never been found.

In 2022, a government truth commission concluded the disappearance was a “state crime”, given the involvement of local, state and federal authorities in the students’ abduction and subsequent cover-up.

“There is no indication the students are alive. All the testimonies and evidence prove that they were cunningly killed and disappeared,” said Alejandro Encinas, the politician who led the commission. “It’s a sad reality.”

By midmorning on Wednesday, the scene outside the presidential palace was calm, a witness told the Reuters news agency. The witness said the door to the palace had been secured, and there were no protesters inside the building.

The demonstrators had been camped outside the presidential palace for a week to demand a meeting with President Lopez Obrador, Al Jazeera correspondent John Holman reported from Mexico City on Wednesday afternoon.

Protesters smashed into the palace door “when they felt that they weren’t going to get that meeting with the president [and] they weren’t going to get that breakthrough” in the case, Holman said. He noted, however, that Lopez Obrador later said he would meet with them in 15 to 20 days.

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