

Mexican Federal Police Implicated in Massacre of 16 People



Mexico City, April 21 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Mexican state security forces are once again under heavy scrutiny after three media outlets published material Sunday that says the Federal Police massacred 16 unarmed people in two separate, but related attacks in January.

Aristegui Noticias, Univision and Proceso published accounts, including a graphic video of the deaths in Apatzingan, Michoacan that contradict the official version of events, which pinned the deaths on "friendly fire."

According to statements made in January, a shootout occurred when Federal Police attempted to retake the municipal headquarters in Apatzingan on January 6th, which had been occupied by members of a self-defense group in protest since late December. However, the media outlets showed evidence that the police deliberately set out to kill the protesters, in some cases executing people with shots at point-blank range.

The outlets said they spoke to 39 people, including eyewitnesses, among them survivors of the attack, as well as personnel from the local hospital and morgue. According to statements given by witnesses and

survivors, the police arrived at the site of protest encampment in the early hours of January 6th and began indiscriminately firing at the protesters. Their leader, Nicolas Sierra, suspecting an imminent attack, had earlier warned the protesters not to fire at the police nor throw rocks so that they would not be “treated as criminals.” None of the protesters were carrying heavy weapons, six had legal handguns, however none of them fired their weapons.

Survivors recalled hearing the police shout, “Kill them like the dogs they are!” One survivor said he witnessed police officers shoot and kill an unarmed man who was on his knees with his hands in the air. Footage from security cameras show people running back and forth, seeking cover from the police gunfire.

In a second attack later that day, survivors alleged that police used machine guns to fire upon vehicles carrying members of the self-defense group and their families. Supporters of the self-defense group had attempted to catch up with the Federal Police caravan to see about freeing their colleagues and take the injured to hospital. When the two groups met, the police opened fire. One witness said that the police killed people as they got out of their vehicles with their hands up.

A video taken by a bystander shows one of the victims still alive, making small movements with his arms, but he was ultimately left to bleed to death. Police reportedly never called an ambulance, despite the fact that the local hospital was near by. An eye-witness also stated that police tampered with the crime scene, planting weapons next to the bodies of the victims. Hospital staff reported that some of the dead arrived with signs of having been executed at point-blank range.

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