

OPEN LETTER

IM-DEFENSORAS DEMANDS SECURITY GUARANTEES FOR MEXICAN WOMEN TEACHERS IN RESISTANCE AGAINST THE IMPOSITION OF THE “EDUCATION REFORM”

We exhort the Mexican government to urgently engage in talks with the CNTE, giving precedence to the route of dialogue and accords, and rejecting the repressive measures of the police and armed forces

Mesoamerica, May 31, 2016 - The 750 women human rights defenders of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua who make up the **Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders** hereby express our solidarity and concern over the risk situation faced by women members of the **National Coordinating Council of Education Workers (CNTE)**, who continue to resist the imposition of the “Education Reform” by the federal and state governments as they participate in marches and encampments in Mexico City and other áreas of the country.

The **National Coordinating Council of Education Workers (CNTE)** has repeatedly stated its opposition to the “Education Reform”, on the basis that it is really an administrative reform that advances the privatization and dismantling of public education, as well as the demobilization of the teachers’ movement. Marked by numerous episodes of the repression of social protest, criminalization campaigns, public disparagement and defamation, and attacks against teachers, the “Reform” presented in February 1913 with the modification of Article 3 of the Constitution, followed by reforms in secondary laws, was definitively passed by both house of Congress in December 2015.

In recent weeks, the **CNTE** has launched a new campaign against the imposition of the “Reform,” with emphasis on protests in Mexico City and the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacan and Oaxaca. We have learned of several different acts of repression against members of the Coordinating Council in Chiapas and Oaxaca, and once more, of the staunch refusal of the federal and state governments to reach agreements through dialogue, which constitutes an explicit rejection of a peaceful solution. In the last few days, the **CNTE** has alerted us of the massive arrival of agents of the Federal Police in Oaxaca, where the conflict is especially intense due to the fact that Section 22 of the Coordinating Council is one of the most active and visible forces in the resistance struggle. At the same time, several local, state and national news outlets have reactivated massive campaigns of defamation, disparagement and criminalization against members of the teachers’ movement with the clear aim of turning the population against it.

The aforementioned factors point to a high-risk panorama for teachers who are keeping up their resistance. We are especially concerned about situations faced by the women teachers, who make up more than 90% of the teachers' organizations and have a majority presence in the encampments and marches. Even so, their low level of visibility in the structures representing the movement makes them even more vulnerable to attacks by different actors. It is important to remember that in previous protests, women teachers have denounced sexual aggression and other attacks by members of the security forces.

In view of the above, **IM-Defensoras** calls on the authorities at different levels of government throughout Mexico to:

- ✦ Place a priority on dialogue and the establishment of accords instead of calling out the police and armed forces against the CNTE.
- ✦ Guarantee the protection and security of women teachers participating in encampments and marches.
- ✦ Respect the right to social protest, free speech and meetings of the teachers' movement.
- ✦ Engage in talks, with no previous conditions, to reach a peaceful, consensus-based solution to the conflict, which respects the rights of both men and women teachers as workers, the universal right to quality public education, and the rights of indigenous peoples.

We also call on the Mexican news media to abstain from disseminating information that distorts and manipulates reality in order to disparage, defame and criminalize the teachers' movement, and we urge national, regional and international agencies to stay attuned to this situation.



Iniciativa Nicaragüense de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos