

Ayotzinapa REPORT

Research and initial conclusions
of the disappearances and homicides
of the normalistas from Ayotzinapa



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Interdisciplinary **G**roup of **I**ndependent **E**xperts (GIEI)

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Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (IGIE)

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The IGIE wishes to thank the team that supported their work during the first six months of its mandate. Without their wholesome commitment that included working until very late every night -including weekends and bank holidays- this report, as well as the rest of the IGIE's work, would not have been possible. Our heartfelt thanks to all of the women and men who were in the team as well as our deepest gratitude.

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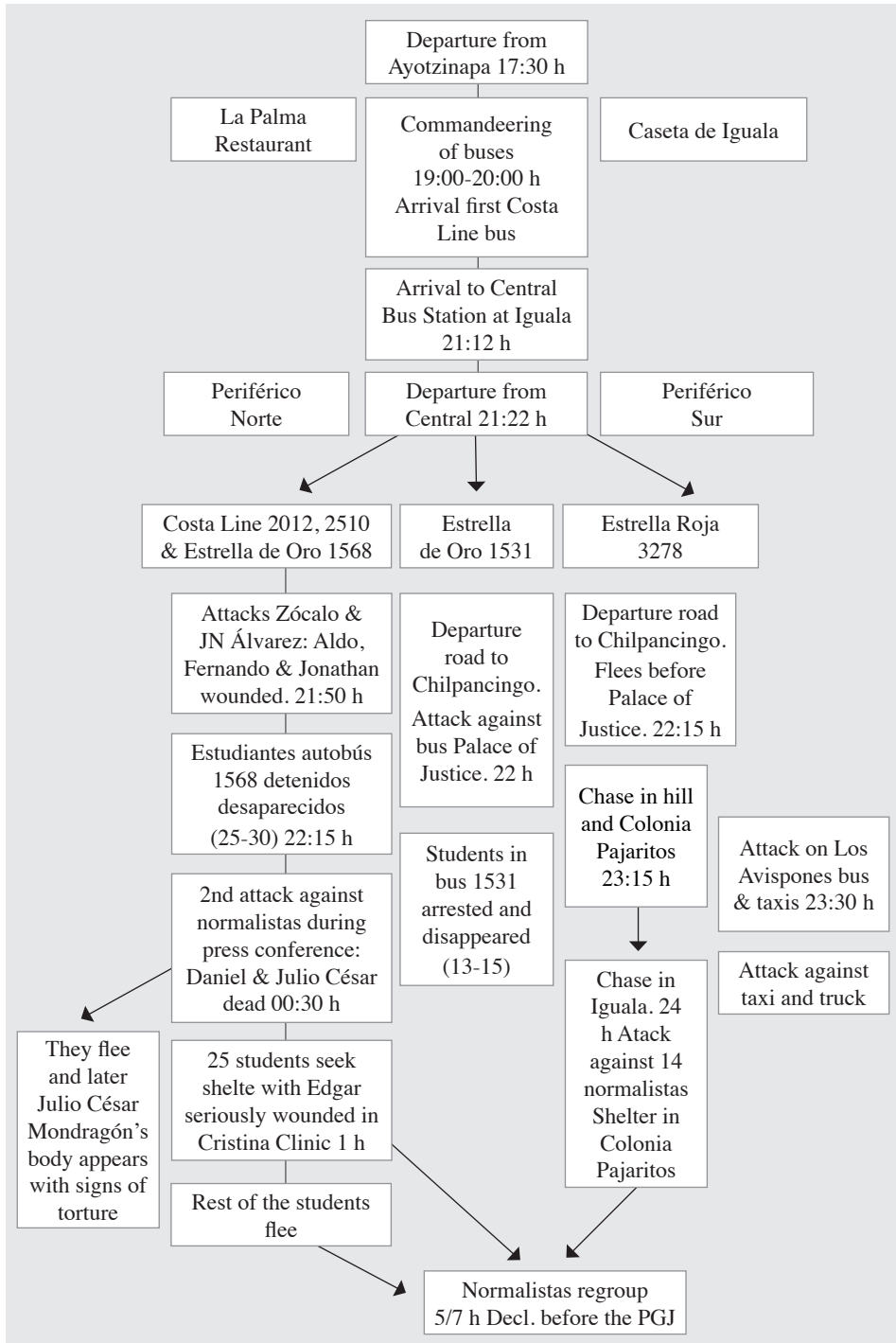
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Introduction

Ayotzinapa, in Náhuatl, is place of turtles. The symbol of the cover of this report is first and foremost a token of recognition to the victims in this case.

The Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (IGIE) was appointed by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, with the agreement of the State of Mexico and that of the representatives of the victims of the case, to follow up on the investigation of the crimes and those responsible thereof, on the search for the disappeared, and on the care dispensed for the victims and their relatives. The IGIE has been working very intensely over these last six months as defined by its official mandate. At the end of this period, and while the possibilities or conditions for a follow-up of the case are defined, the Group wishes to publish its report. The idea is to account for all the work carried out, and describe all our findings, progress and proposals to the authorities of Mexico, to the victims' families and to the victims themselves, as well as to the human rights community, to the media and the people who have been following the case.

This report is a contribution to the fight against impunity. The IGIE has read and analyzed in depth the investigations carried out by the State Procurator General (PGJ) and the Procurator General of the Republic (PGR), and has used, as a fundamental part of its study, documents, declarations and evidence that were already included in their records. The Group has also carried out its own research on key aspects and has had independent expert reports drawn up by internationally-acclaimed independent experts in several of the necessary fields.

We wish to thank the State, especially the Secretariats of Foreign Affairs and Governance, and the office of the Procurator General of the Republic for their collaboration throughout these six months, their collaboration doubtlessly facilitated our work in the country. We also value their availability and the fact that they provided us with full access to the files and to a considerable part of the sources of information we had requested. We also wish to thank the relatives and victims for their confidence in our work, as well as for the collaboration of their legal representatives and experts.

The revelations in this report are mostly descriptive and fulfill the highest standards of human rights research. They cover the three main areas included in the IGIE mandate. The research carried out on the facts and responsibilities provide new visions on what happened in terms of the direct aggression endured by the *normalistas* as well as reference to their possible fate.

The IGIE is sorry it cannot offer the relatives, the State and Mexican society as a whole, or the whole world, a final diagnosis on what happened with the 43 disappeared *normalistas*. There are many difficulties that are pointed out in this report. This report, however, does include facts that the Group considers proven, and a few others that it considers proven that they did not take place or on which there is such controversy that their validity is questionable.

For the IGIE, the relationship with the relatives and other victims has been a key factor in this process. The report attempts to gather their experiences, because in them there is much to be learned from the impact of forced disappearances and on the influence of the treatment received from the State authorities and social organizations. To have been able to approach this experience and to try to understand their situation has been a key element to be able to develop constructive policies both in terms of research and in terms of the search for victims and caring for them.

This report has been structured in the various aspects of the IGIE mandate. It includes a chapter on the assessment of the facts and on the possible causes thereof. It also concludes with a chapter on recommendations for the Ayotzinapa case and general recommendations for the general situation of forced disappearances of people in Mexico and Iguala. The IGIE hopes that their report will be an opportunity to straighten the course of the investigation, the search for the victims and the care for their relatives and other victims. The Group also hopes that it can be of use not only in terms of learning from the Ayotzinapa case, but also to address the problem of forced disappearances as a whole in Mexico.

Characteristics of the facts and analysis of possible causes

In fact, buses had also been commandeered in Iguala, but we had never received this type of aggressiveness, it was... as if we were the worse criminals, as if we deserved death, I believe that a drug trafficker or a hired killer is treated better. For us, it just didn't matter, we would go around the units and we would return to our Rural Teachers College. T. C. Teacher trainee student (“*normalista*”¹) at Ayotzinapa.

The reasons and characteristics of this attack against the *normalistas* from Ayotzinapa, were extremely puzzling and bewildering for the students themselves, for Mexico and for the rest of the world: how can such serious crimes take place? And in fact, what exactly happened? The dimensions of the attack, however, have not been taken into account in a manner that would allow for an in-depth analysis of the facts.

The characteristics of the attacks endured by the *normalistas* and other groups on the nights of 26th and 27th September 2014 are summarized in this section. An analysis of what happened is carried out, together with an analysis of the circumstances and conditions that made such attacks possible, the massive character of the attacks and the number of victims. Also analyzed are the level of violence exerted, the various crime scenes and the perpetrators' level of coordination. This report also covers the degree of information previously available to other authorities and the information they had at the time of the crimes; the objectives and explanations of the attacks –more specifically so in relation to one of the buses- and the problems in the investigation that indicate that this circumstance was the possibly what triggered the action. Finally, there is also an analysis of the absence of protection for the *normalistas* during the various hours that the attacks lasted, as well as an analysis of the very decision to carry out the forced disappearance of a group of 43 *normalistas*.

1. Massive character of the attack and number of victims

During these events there were over 180 people who were direct victims of various human rights violations, the great majority of them being young men, as well as many minors:

- 1) Six people were extrajudicially executed in four different crime scenes (including a *normalista* with clear signs of having been tortured, and another two who were shot to death at point-blank range, that is to say, from less than 15 cm away²; and the

1 **Translator's note:** In Mexico, a Rural Teachers College is a “Escuela Normal”. Its students are therefore called *Normalistas*, which is henceforth the term that is going to be used in this report.

2 **Forensic report on autopsies of the assassinated Ayotzinapa *normalistas* in Iguala.** Dr. Francisco Etxeberria Gabilondo. Forensic doctor, Professor Legal Medicine, University of the

three dead in the attack against the *Los Avispones* soccer team, among which there is one minor): at the crossroads between Juan N. Alvarez and Periférico Norte streets (in this case in two different episodes), on the Andariego road, on the way to the Iguala industrial area; on the highway leaving Iguala, in front the Palace of Justice; and on the Santa Teresa crossroads 15 km away from the town of Chilpancingo.

- 2) Over 40 people were wounded³, some of them seriously, and these were surgically operated on, one of which is still in comma and/or a state of stupor. These abuses took place during the referred facts in the initial crime scene in the Juan N. Alvarez and Periférico Norte crossroads, in the second attack three hours later in the same place, and at the Santa Teresa crossroads where another two consecutive attacks took place;
- 3) Around another 80 people, including students from Ayotzinapa and teachers and other people who demonstrated their support endured different forms of persecution and attacks against their lives in at least three crime scenes, including the drivers of the buses involved: the Juan N. Alvarez and Periférico Norte street crossing; the area before the Palace of Justice and the Pajaritos colony; and the zone of 24th February Colony in Iguala.
- 4) Another 30 people survived killing attempts in the case of the bus with the *Los Avispones* soccer team in the crime scene at the Santa Teresa crossroads.
- 5) 43 *normalistas* from Ayotzinapa were arrested from two different crime scenes and buses, one in the town centre and the other in the outskirts of the town of Iguala. They were later subjected to enforced disappearances⁴.

Basque Country. Samples that show that the shooting of Daniel Solís Gallardo and Julio César Ramírez took place from less than 15 cm away from the victims. In the case of Julio César Mondragón Fontes it indicates that he suffered injuries in two different instances: the first of these were the result of several blunt blows and other later ones –that were the cause of his death- produced multiple fractures in the head, the origin of which is not described in the autopsy. In addition to this, there are also post-mortem injuries with the skin of his face flayed to the bare skull with marks of canine teeth. This indicates that a new autopsy is necessary, especially in order to have a complete analysis of the injuries in the skull and face due to lack of information observed in the autopsy that has been carried out. See annexes.

- 3 According to the Report of the Mexican State in response to the Urgent Actions of the CED and Special Procedures, dated on 10th November, the number of victims who display injuries related to these facts is 22. The CEAV (*Comisión Ejecutiva de Atención a Víctimas* - Executive Commission of Care for Victims) cared for a total of 35 direct victims (including three of the six people who were killed) and 107 indirect victims related to these facts. The Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (IGIE) has found other serious victims in their research that have not been taken into account in these lists, and this is why we state that the number of direct victims who suffered injuries to their physical integrity is over 40 people.
- 4 List of disappeared students: 1) Felipe Arnulfo Rosa, 2) Benjamín Ascencio Bautista, 3) Israel Caballero Sánchez, 4) Abel García Hernández, 5) Emiliano Alen Gaspar de la Cruz, 6) Doriam

- 6) Among the victims it is also necessary to take into account the relatives of these direct victims -at least 700 people and that considering direct relatives only- and especially the relatives of the 43 disappeared *normalistas*.

Although the level of aggression and violence cannot be transformed into numeric data, these numbers show both the extension of the violence, and the different times and crime scenes in which they occurred, and the scope of the consequences that persist at present.

2. Level of aggression endured

The referred data show the level of the aggression endured, the indiscriminate character thereof (shootouts against civilians, who were disarmed and fleeing), as well as the progressive increase of the level of aggression from the beginning of the commandeering of buses (chases and shots fired to the sky) to road blocks, shooting to kill, beatings, preparation of ambush actions, or long-standing persecution that were experienced at different periods.

The attack with shots fired in the very town centre, against buses with young people who had taken them from the bus station, before a numerous group of people who were in the street or at a concert in the town square, with a strong contingent and the deployment of police agents throughout the town appears to be completely out of proportion and devoid of sense, in comparison to the level of risk implied in the commandeering of buses or a possible confrontation with stones. The *normalistas* were unarmed, nor were they boycotting any political event whatsoever, nor had they attacked the population as has been indicated in different versions.

The Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (IGIE) has been able to carry out its evaluation work, but has had to face an enormous level of fear, -still very much present

Gonzales Parral, 7) Jorge Luis Gonzales Parral, 8) Magdaleno Rubén Lauro Villegas, 9) José Luis Luna Torres, 10) Mauricio Ortega Valerio, 11) Jesús Jovany Rodríguez Tlatempa, 12) Abelardo Vázquez Peniten, 13) Adan Abraján de la Cruz, 14) Christian Tomás Colón Garnica, 15) Luis Ángel Francisco Arzola, 16) Carlos Lorenzo Hernández Muñoz, 17) Israel Jacinto Lugardo, 18) Julio César López Patolzin, 19) José Ángel Navarrete González, 20) Marcial Pablo Baranda, 21) Miguel Ángel Mendoza Zacarías, 22) Alexander Mora Venancio, 23) Bernardo Flores Alcaraz, 24) Luis Ángel Abarca Carrillo, 25) Jorge Álvarez Nava, 26) José Ángel Campos Cantor, 27) Jorge Aníbal Cruz Mendoza, 28) Giovanni Galindes Guerrero, 29) Jhosivani Guerrero de la Cruz, 30) Cutberto Ortiz Ramos, 31) Everardo Rodríguez Bello, 32) Christian Alfonso Rodríguez Telumbre, 33) Martín Getsemany Sánchez García, 34) Jonás Trujillo Gonzales, 35) José Eduardo Bartolo Tlatempa, 36) Leonel Castro Abarca, 37) Miguel Ángel Hernández Martínez, 38) Carlos Iván Ramírez Villarreal, 39) Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideño, 40) Antonio Santana Maestro, 41) Marco Antonio Gómez Molina, 42) César Manuel Gonzales Hernández and 43) Saúl Bruno García.

nowadays- to be able to carry out its research activities in Iguala. Numerous witnesses did not want to speak; others did so in an atmosphere of considerable fear and requesting confidentiality, while others provided information only after numerous previous contacts carried out through confidence networks. Fear is not solely a response to the level of aggression endured, but also to the degree of control that is perceptible in the area by the perpetrators or their accomplices, and to the lack of protection felt by the witnesses against possible actions that could be carried out against them. Protection of witnesses is a key element in this process and its importance has been pointed out to the state authorities.

3. Crime scenes of the different attacks: complex and coordinated actions

As has been previously pointed out, there were at least nine different instances of attacks and persecution that took place that night in different places and times, and some of them were quite protracted in terms of duration. The various frontal attacks were as follows:

- Crime scene at Galeana street, police persecution with shooting into the air at first but soon afterwards at the buses and *normalistas* that were attempting to leave the town. At 21:30 on 26th September 2014.
- The cross road of Juan N. Alvarez and Periférico Norte. With the streets blocked by police patrol cars at a short distance, with a concentration of 3 buses (two *Costa Line* buses and one from *Estrella de Oro*) and about 70 *normalistas* that were in a crossfire situation between at least ten police patrol cars in front of and behind the buses. Police officers from both Iguala and Cocula took part in this shootout. In this crime scene *normalistas* who were attempting to move a patrol car to be able to leave were attacked in an indiscriminate manner. As a result, one *normalista* was extremely seriously wounded and another two were seriously wounded. From the third *Estrella de Oro* 1568 bus, many people were arrested of which 25 were later to become disappeared. The action took approximately 55 minutes, from 21:45 to 22:40. The ballistics report indicates that, in this case, shots were aimed at the interior of the bus where the passengers were.
- Exit to Chilpancingo from Iguala, in front of the Iguala Palace of Justice. A *Estrella de Oro* 1531 bus with 15-20 *normalistas* was stopped and destroyed by the Iguala municipal police, and its occupants were beaten, forced to get off the bus, arrested and later were disappeared. According to a witness, shots were fired against one of the *normalistas*. The action lasted approximately from 45 minutes to 1 hour, as from 21:40 on 26th September 2014, that is to say, simultaneously to the attack at the Juan N. Alvarez and Periférico Norte crossing.
- Exit from Iguala to Chilpancingo, a little before the Palace of Justice. A *Estrella Roja* bus, that had been commandeered by a group of 14 *normalistas* was stopped and its occupants threatened by the police. In this occasion the police do not get to shoot.

Later they are chased until they hide in a hill, and one hour later they are chased again when they try to go down to the highway. These facts take place between 22:00 and 23:00 on 26th September 2014.

- Attack against the bus on which the *Los Avispones* soccer team was traveling, in the Santa Teresa crossroads, 15 km away from Iguala on the road to Chilpancingo and also against several other vehicles. Two people in the vehicles die as a result of the attack, and there are at least another four very severely wounded, and several others have severe wounds. Another woman dies as well, and several occupants of two taxis are wounded. This happened at approximately 23:30 on 26th September 2014. The ballistics report indicates that the shots were aimed at the interior of the bus where the passengers were.
- Later, a second attack is carried out in the same place, another taxi and a truck are shot at, and as a result several people are severely wounded. At 23:40 on 26th September 2014.
- Road into Iguala and Periferico: the *normalistas* are chased until the 24th February Colony. A group of 14 *normalistas* is chased at night when they try to regroup with their companions, and they become the targets of attempts to run over them, they are threatened, stones are thrown at them and shots are fired at them until they hide in a house (10 *normalistas*) and on a hill (4 *normalistas*). This happens between 23:15 - 24: 00 h on 26th September 2014.
- Attack at the Juan N. Alvarez and Periférico Norte street crossing while a press conference was being held by the *normalistas*, where there are journalists and teachers who came to support the students. Some time before, there was constant patrolling by the municipal police and civil defense. Two *normalistas* are killed by point-blank shootings, one is severely wounded who then manages to shelter in the “Hospital Cristina” Clinic, together with 24 *normalistas* and a teacher. They shelter there for almost one hour and forty-five minutes from the attack to the moment the wounded student is transferred to the hospital at Iguala. The attack took place at 00:30 on the 27th September 2014. Other people who went to take care of the *normalistas* are wounded, and the bursts of gun fire are a frontal attack against the lives of many more people who were present.
- Death of a *normalista* that is tortured and executed at the crime scene at the Camino del Andariego road, in the industrial area in Iguala. This happened in the early hours of the morning, probably between 01:00 and 02:00 a.m. on the 27th September 2014.

4. Time in which the action took place

The attack against the *normalistas*, and also against the *Los Avispones* soccer team and several other vehicles, was carried out during a time span of nearly 3 hours by Iguala

and Cocula police officers and other aggressors (21: 40 to 00:30 h), and after a previous period of 2 hours (from 17:59 to 20:00 h) during which their movements were monitored before arriving at the town of Iguala. This previous monitoring was carried out by state police, federal police and the army.

The attacks with the intervention of at least two municipal police forces from two different towns, i.e. from Iguala and Cocula, in two different places (Juan N. Alvarez and Periferico Norte street crossing, and on the road exit from Iguala to Chilpancingo near the Palace of Justice), took one hour in both places and were carried out in a coordinated and simultaneous manner, sometimes even with the participation of the same aggressors in both places, part of whom went to reinforce the scene of the bus that had stopped in front of the Palace of Justice. Witnesses indicate the presence of state and/or ministerial police in both scenes, and a ministerial patrol car in the later chase after a group of survivors in the Colonia Pajaritos neighborhood.

5. The C-4 as a space for the coordination of information

The security forces of the state, municipal and federal police, in addition to the Mexican army, have a system of coordination known as C-4. This system was operational on the night of 26th to 27th September 2014. The different communications the IGIE has been allowed access to show that such information was continuously listened to by the various forces. In these communications it is possible to see that:

- Most of them seem to be communications of people who warn of acts of violence or request aid through the 066 emergencies telephone.
- Some communications indicate the intervention of certain agents from the state or federal police verifying existing actions or information.
- There are two periods -during certain hours- in which no C-4 communications have been provided to the IGIE. These periods coincide with the time just after the first attack at Juan N. Álvarez street and with the time of the second attack in the same place.
- An official document from the Civil Defense coordination at Chilpancingo indicates that they do not have access to information from C-4 at certain times that night because the communication is cut by Sedena⁵.

5 Report by RMV, the coordinator of the Civil Defense of the State in the North Zone, addressed to LRDM, Undersecretary of Civil Defense of the Municipality of Iguala, in which there is an account of Civil Defense activity through C-4. This document indicates that on that night, Sedena handled information in a restrictive manner in C-4. This report dated on 27th September of 2014 says: *Also the C-4 dispatcher of the C-4 continues asking for more information,*

C-4 monitored the departure of the *normalistas* from Chilpancingo at 6pm, up to their arrival in the neighborhood of Iguala. The security cameras that are part of the monitoring and coordination system could provide information on part of these facts, but the IGIE was informed that they had been made unusable and in other cases the recordings existed but they were not provided either to the Attorney General of the Republic or to the IGIE. Only the pictures from one camera could identify the patrol cars that took detainees to the town exit to Taxco. Other images were apparently destroyed, and three video recordings from the bus-station could be only be acquired after being requested by the IGIE in May 2015⁶, at the end of which police presence is observed in the Hermenegildo Galeana street after the buses leave the bus station.

6. Presence of agents from different security or army forces who observe the attacks

In both scenes with *Estrella de Oro* buses 1568 and 1531, in which there were forced disappearances of *normalistas*, the aggressors were police agents from the Iguala and Cocula municipal police forces and perhaps others. In the crime scene at the Palace of Justice, according to witnesses, the perpetrators said that policemen or groups from Huitzuco were going to arrive in order to take part of the *normalistas* away⁷.

Before that, the federal police, the state police⁸, and the army had personnel posted in the Iguala turnpike at that time, which was where the *normalistas* had arranged to try to commandeer buses and where a state patrol car would have observed their arrival before leaving. According to the *normalistas*' testimony, the federal police was present close to the other place where they had foreseen to commandeer buses, the crossroads at Huitzuco. That is to say, before the facts, the *normalistas* had been followed by the federal police, the state police and the army, all of which knew these were students from Ayotzinapa engaged in fund raising activities and in the commandeering of buses.

On the other hand, different witnesses also indicate the presence of the federal police in the crime scene at the Palace of Justice at two different points in time as well as that of

but there information that is restricted to him since that information is handled by Sedena personnel. The IGIE does not know if this is the reason that would explain the absence of existing information or if there is another reason.

- 6 Volume 113 page 83, Communication of the Bus Station in which they inform the other videos cannot be recovered except for those recorded of the arrival of the students.
- 7 Declaration before the office of the Procurator General of the Republic by a protected witness. April 2015.
- 8 Official communication subscribed by JAB, Operative Coordinator of the North Region, State Police, 27 of September 2014, where he informs his superiors on what happened on 26th and 27th September 2014, in the town of Iguala.

ministerial police officers, according to the testimony of *normalistas*, other witnesses and municipal police officers; ministerial police were also seen in the crime scene at Juan N. Alvarez, according to some ministerial police agents; and army intelligence agents were also seen in the crime scene at Galeana street (exit to Juan N. Alvarez) and in that at the Palace of Justice, according to reports and statements by army members; and, according to the testimony of these survivors, ministerial police were also seen in the chase after *normalistas* in the Pajaritos Colony.

In addition to the municipal police forces of Iguala and Cocula that were the direct aggressors, in the two crime scenes at Juan N. Alvarez and at the Palace of Justice where *normalistas* were arrested and where there were forced disappearances, members of the army, the federal police and the ministerial police were also present at different times. After the arrests of the *normalistas*, an army patrol vehicle visited the Barandilla police station where a group of arrested *normalistas* would apparently have been taken, and later that same patrol vehicle went to the Hospital Cristina Clinic where a group of surviving *normalistas* and one of the severely wounded were sheltering. Also it protected the scene of the crime where two *normalistas* had been killed in the Juan N Alvarez and Periférico Norte street crossing after the second attack. Later, another army patrol vehicle arrived between 6 and 7am and protected the place where Julio Caesar Mondragón's tortured dead body had appeared, before the civilian authorities arrived.

7. Management and coordination of the attacks and/or responses to such attacks

The level of intervention of the different police forces in the various crime scenes and the attacks at different times as portrayed in the documents, testimonies and expert opinions evaluated by the IGIE clearly shows there was coordination and a chain of command in order to carry out such actions. The operational necessity of coordination between the police forces from two different municipalities (Iguala and Cocula), and at least 18 municipal patrol cars and one from the Civil Defense⁹ that participated in what happened that night indicate there necessarily had to be a central coordination level from which orders were issued. Also, according to a protected witness, a state patrol car participated in transferring an arrested bus driver who was released soon afterwards.

On the other hand, one of the surviving drivers indicates that he was taken to safety house in a zone of Iguala, and was taken before a man who directed the operation or took decisions on the actions to be carried out with detainees. Such a *modus operandi* points to the existence of a control structure, with operational coordination. Also this testimony suggests that the decision on what to do with the bus drivers who had been arrested

9 In addition to these, other patrols of the federal and ministerial police were present in the various crime scenes.

together with the *normalistas* who were later to disappear was not taken at that point in time and that the objective of the action was not against them but against the *normalistas*.

Notwithstanding the fact that the content of the communications at the time when the attacks were taking place is unknown, we do know that there was communication between two of those accused of being responsible, the Municipal President (Mayor) and the Secretary of Public Security, Felipe Flores. One of the antennas that gather some calls from this telephone is situated near the scene of the Palace of Justice¹⁰. Mr. Abarca said to have been established with members of the Office of the Secretary of Security of the Government of Guerrero, the federal police and battalion 27. If the contents of these conversations included information on the facts or other coordination circumstances, then it is part of what needs to be investigated.

8. Purpose of the attacks

The attacks that have been documented and analyzed in this study show that the objective of the action was to not allow buses from Iguala leave (*Costa Line* 2512 and 2012 and *Estrella de Oro* 1568 in Juan N. Alvarez street). Once they had already left the town, the objective was not to allow them to continue on their way (*Estrella de Oro* 1531, at the Palace of Justice), and when it seemed that they were still fleeing, to put an end to any possibility of escape (*Castro-Tours* bus with the *Los Avispones* soccer team at the Santa Teresa crossroads).

The commandeering of buses has been habitual practice in Ayotzinapa and at other Rural Teachers Colleges¹¹, without such practice ever entailing such a violent response until these attacks took place, although there had been incidents in other occasions. In such other occasions, the predominant goal was to prevent the action, to stop it once it had started or to arrest the authors of such actions, but never had there been such a mass

10 According to the information provided to the IGIE during the time span in which the facts took place, Felipe Flores Velasquez, the Director of the Iguala Guerrero Police and Jose Luis Abarca, the former mayor, made several phone calls to each other. The content of these calls is unknown, but they were made in a repeated and continuous manner. From 23:03:57 on 26th September until 02:42:42 on 27th September, there were 12 telephone calls between these two people which were registered from different antennas in Iguala to the one that is located near the Palace of Justice. At 23:03:57 a call was made that was registered in the antenna located in Benito Juárez, in the center of Iguala, at 01:30:50, and 01:32:28 at Alvaro Obregón street, and in the centre at 01:51:03. At 01:57:19 another call was registered in the antenna at Las Margaritas, in front of the Palace of Justice and finally the three calls made at 1:58:20, 02:01:33 and 02:42:42 were again registered in the antenna that is located in center of the town in Nicolás Bravo street.

11 Declaration by JOA, Legal Representative of the Estrella de Oro Company before the Procurator General of the Republic AP 874 Volume 21.

operation of indiscriminate attacks, direct attacks against lives, extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances, with attacks taking a protracted period of time, all within a massive and coordinated operation. There was not an adequate, necessary, rational nor proportional use of force. All of this means that the action of the perpetrators was motivated by what was considered an action carried out by the *normalistas* against high-level interests.

The IGIE in its research has considered several different hypotheses reference to the reasons that motivated the aggression. From an attack due to the fact that Ayotzinapa is considered a social base of political or insurgent movements¹², to the official thesis that was maintained for a certain amount of time on this being a confusion on the identity of the *normalistas* by the perpetrators. Another possibility considered was that this effectively was a punishment against the *normalistas* due to the existing precedents of confrontations and signaling against the Mayor, Mr. Abarca. Nevertheless, in opinion of the IGIE, those hypotheses explain neither the modus operandi nor the level of coordination and violence. It is probable that the contemptuous stereotypes on the “*ayotzinapos*” which different sectors brought to the attention of the IGIE on many occasions -even during their research activities- may be among the factors that could explain the aggression. Nevertheless, in opinion of the IGIE, this may have been a facilitating factor for the aggression, since scorn for others promotes violence, but never a detonating factor thereof nor an explanation for the level of violence used.

The common element shared by the different attacks has to do with stopping the buses and attacking witnesses of the facts or emptying the places of any people that had turned up there. In addition, the level of violence against the buses became progressively higher, from the attack when coming out of central bus station to the attack against the bus carrying the *Los Avispones* soccer team in the Santa Teresa crossroads, to the press conference held by the *normalistas* in the junction between Juan N Alvarez and Periférico Norte streets, and the murder with torture of a *normalista*.

Although it could have been possible to hide the repression by allowing the buses to leave the town in order to have carried it out in a context of greater isolation, the operation was undertaken with an inadequate and disproportionate use of force in the presence of numerous witnesses in the centre of the town. This probably has to do with the impunity with which the perpetrators acted and which the authors felt, but also with some kind of high-level objective that justified both any type of violence, however indiscriminate and evident, and the urgency with which it was all carried out.

Although a relationship of the facts with drug trafficking has been pointed at in different occasions and even in the official version of the facts (a group of students that would have

12 See a reference to this possibility in the statement by VLM, Sub Procurator and Procurator General of Guerrero, AP 874 volume 21.

been confused with a group of drug traffickers; a group of members of organized crime infiltrated among the students who went to the town with obscure objectives of carrying out a political boycott; a group of drug traffickers or infiltrated students whose objective is to kill “opponents” or to try to clear them out of their territory), there is an aspect that has not been sufficiently considered up to now. On the one hand, public information indicates that Iguala is a place of trade and transport of narcotics, especially heroin, towards the United States and specifically to Chicago. A statement made in a recent case in the United States shows the links in the city and the trafficking of heroin that habitually takes place there. The information provided to the IGIE indicates that Iguala was indeed a very important drug traffic hub. According to this information, certain buses are used to transport heroin and cocaine as well as the money obtained from this kind of drug traffic between Iguala and Chicago¹³.

That is to say, the business that is carried out in the town of Iguala could explain the extremely violent reaction and the massive character of the attack, its duration in time and even the follow-up attack against the *Los Avispones* soccer team, as in this case there was a bus that had been commandeered by the students which had not been stopped. In spite of all of this, this line of investigation has not been explored.

13 On 8th December 2014, the Federal Public Prosecutor for the State of Illinois, Nicol Kim, filed a “probable cause affidavit” for the consideration of a Judge. This was a sworn declaration to document a probable cause to obtain a search warrant of buildings, vehicles and computers, signed by A. S., a DEA agent. This investigation is directed against Pablo Vega and others. Vega is termed to be the head in Chicago of the so-called “*Guerreros Unidos*” cartel. From the affidavit and the monitoring of telephone calls described therein, there is information that indicates that the cartel transported drugs from Mexico to Chicago by means of the use of public transport buses. In a telephone call interception in that case, carried out during a conversation between two subjects under investigation between Guerrero and Chicago, instructions are given to clean the buses and in another conversation there is information on the interception of a bus at the border. The transport of the drugs was made in an especially-designed compartment for that purpose. Although none of the bus companies mentioned in the affidavit are the ones from which the students commandeered buses on 26th September 2014, the IGIE has received information according to which other bus companies are also used for such shipments from Iguala. No investigation has been carried out to determine who the owners of those companies are. Insofar as the IGIE has been informed, no investigation has been carried out on the matter in Mexico. There has also not been any investigation whatsoever to determine if there are any commercial bonds or bonds of any other kind establishing a relationship between the *Monarca* and *Volcano* bus companies, which are the ones pointed out in this affidavit, with the owners of the buses that were indeed commandeered by the students. Department of Justice, U. S. Attorney’s Office, Northern District of Illinois. “Eight Defendants Charged With Distributing Heroin In Chicago Area On Behalf Of *Guerreros Unidos* Mexican Drug Cartel”. 10th December 2014. <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/eight-defendants-charged-distributing-heroin-chicago-area-behalf-guerrero-unidos>. The information indicates: “This operation strikes an important Mexican organization that deals with drugs that they have presumably routinely distributed, such as great quantities of heroin and cocaine through the mid-west [of the United States]”.

This example would show that the perpetrators knew that it was a matter of 5 buses and not 4 against which action had been taken or had been stopped, or simply that the order to attack the buses had been issued specifying that one of them would have already left the town. It is necessary to consider that the *Los Avispones* bus had passed a squad of Iguala municipal police officers, without stopping, just a few kilometers before in the same road on which they were later attacked.

9. The fifth bus and the purpose of the attack

From the beginning of its research, the IGIE had its doubts on the number of buses involved in the case. While the *normalistas* and the indictment issued by the State Attorney General's Office spoke of 5 buses, (two *Estrella de Oro* buses, two *Costa line* buses and an *Estrella Roja* bus), the investigation carried out by the Attorney General of the Republic indicated that it was 4 buses (omitting the *Estrella Roja* bus), even though this bus was referred to even in the testimonies taken from survivors on the very day it all happened and such references were included in the proceedings. Nevertheless, the records refer to a bus that would have been commandeered by *normalistas*, that would have left the central bus station and would have immediately been destroyed by the students and made unusable, although it was never identified nor was this investigated within a crime scene. The only aggression observed by the IGIE against one of the buses occurred when a group of *normalistas* threw stones against some of the glass windows of the Costa Line bus that had been previously parked in the bus station, inside which their companions had been locked up, the fact which had actually triggered the arrival at Iguala of the rest of *normalistas*.

When the IGIE made it evident to the Attorney General of the Republic that there had been another bus, and recommended that testimony should be taken from its driver, such testimony was taken without allowing for the IGIE's presence. The testimony contains a version of what happened that does not coincide at all, except for the first part when the bus leaves the bus station, with the testimony offered by several *normalistas* that commandeered this bus. According to the testimony taken in the absence of the IGIE, the bus left the bus station through a back street behind the station and advanced for a few blocks along the same street and, because of their state of nervousness, the students thought that the bus did not work well and got off the bus with the intention of going back to the station to commandeer another one. Nevertheless, all of the testimonies from the *normalistas* that went in that bus indicate that the bus was on its way out down the street and that the driver asked the *normalistas* to stop so that a woman could bring him some documentation and clothes that he needed. After stopping and waiting for quite some time, a woman arrived on a motorcycle and spoke with the driver, which delayed the departure, they finally arrived to the road exit from Iguala to Chilpancingo, to the scene where the *Estrella de Oro* 1531 bus had already been stopped, near the Palace of Justice. The testimonies of the survivors are consistent with each other, in that they were forced to

get off the bus, about 100 meters away from the *Estrella de Oro* bus, and that they fled to a hill. There are several pieces of evidence in C-4 of calls on movements of young people in this area, in the Colonia Pajaritos and in Colonia 24 de Febrero that fully coincide with the declarations of the *normalistas* and which were finally confirmed before the very Attorney General of the Republic in a statement rendered once again in July 2015. A witness indicates that in that scene, about 100 meters from the bus, before the place where the *Estrella de Oro* bus was, the *Estrella Roja* bus had been stopped by a Federal Police patrol car. A handwritten statement by another witness also indicates this in the Attorney General's records. These circumstances have yet to be investigated.

On the other hand, when the IGIE requested an inspection of the affected buses, one bus, the *Estrella Roja* 3278 was displayed like the bus that was commandeered by the group of *normalistas* that departed through the back of the bus station. This bus, like the rest of the inspected buses, was examined by the IGIE and photographs of it were analyzed, although the study could not be carried out as a crime scene study due to the time in which the buses were displayed. Nevertheless, when contrasting the bus with the testimony of the *normalistas*, certain characteristics of that bus did not tally with their testimonies. A general comparison analysis between the bus displayed and the bus that appears in the bus station video images taken that night make it doubtful that it was the same bus. In order to be able to clarify the situation, a specific expert analysis was requested on the comparison of the video images, even though these are not of good quality, with the photographic images gathered of the displayed *Estrella Roja* bus. The expert work points out the differences that exist between those two buses and confirms the possibility that it is not the same bus. These differences have been presented before the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic in order to have such facts investigated.

Nevertheless, in this itinerary we have stated five serious contradictions and omissions that reinforce the hypothesis that this fifth bus could be a key element to explain the facts:

- 1) The nonexistence of an *Estrella Roja* bus in the official version and records of the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic, although the *normalistas* had informed about it in their initial statements, which had been gathered in the initial investigation carried out by Attorney General of the Republic. No official explanation of this omission has been provided.
- 2) The identification in the same records of the bus that was commandeered, that left the bus station and was later rendered unusable by the *normalistas*, which nobody has any knowledge of nor any more details are provided, nor is analyzed as a crime scene. In the records dated 20th December 2014 and 2nd January 2015, it is stated that: "(...) and the third bus which was destroyed and abandoned near the bus station".
- 3) The enormous differences in terms of the route and circumstances of the *Estrella Roja* bus, between the testimony of the driver included in the statement before the

Office of the Attorney General of the Republic, and that which finally was taken in June 2015, and the testimonies gathered from the *normalistas* and their statements before State Attorney General and the Attorney General of the Republic both at the time the facts had taken place (on 27th September 2014) and months later (October and July 2015). All of this in addition to the video requested by the IGIE to the Attorney General of the Republic of the Southern Bus Station where it is possible to see this departure, and an *in situ* inspection by the IGIE on the track later followed by the *normalistas*.

- 4) The evident differences between the bus displayed as the one which left the bus station of Iguala that night with *normalistas* and the images taken by the IGIE in the inspection of the alleged bus, differences indicated by a specialized expert report and by the group of *normalistas* that had commandeered it.
- 5) The contradictions between the testimony of the driver on its later route, going to Jocutla, and the register sheet¹⁴ of the itinerary of this bus on that night, which indicates that it left 10 minutes before what is taped in the bus-station video, the time for which was verified by the IGIE. Also, the fact that the incidence report does not indicate that this bus was commandeered by a group of *normalistas*, and the fact that it states that the bus went normally to Cuautla, which was its destination and not to Jocutla as was indicated by the driver in his statement.
- 6) The existence in the records of two contradictory statements on these facts, with two different companies, a statement and a manuscript. All those evident inconsistencies and contradictions bring about the suspicion that under those circumstances there are important hidden aspects to be considered. And that those important hidden aspects may have to do with the *modus operandi* and the motivation of the aggression.
- 7) There is also the circumstance to be taken into account that this bus was the only one that was not violently attacked that night (the others were, that is, Costa Line buses 2012 and 2510, *Estrella de Oro* buses 1531 and 1568 and the *Castro-Tours* bus, carrying the *Los Avispones* soccer team).

In summary, according to information collected, Iguala is a very important place in terms of heroin trafficking and, according to public information, part of that traffic is carried out by means of the use of some buses that hide this drug in a camouflaged manner. The students commandeered 5 buses, and, as indicated, the very existence of one of the *Estrella Roja* buses was not present in the investigation. The testimony of the driver of this bus is contradictory with the testimonies of the *normalistas* and even with the route

14 Official note 8700/2015 without date, states that the Cuautla Estrella Roja 3278 bus of Cuautla covered the itinerary Iguala - Cuautla with departure scheduled at 21:10 on that date. Volume 111 (without numbering pages) but with automatic pdf number 63.

sheet that corresponds to that bus, however, a manuscript in the records confirms the version of the *normalistas*. Pending deeper analyses, the bus displayed does not seem to correspond with the bus that was recorded in the video cameras during that night.

Having examined all the possible hypotheses of those proven facts, the only circumstance that explains the contradictions between the facts reference to this bus, and to its itinerary in town that night, the driver's conflicting versions, and the different versions in two documents, the differences with the *normalista* witnesses and other proven circumstances, the absence of this bus in the records, and the contradictory documents therein, all make this bus a central element of the case. The action of commandeering buses by the *normalistas*, albeit with other objectives, was to obtain transport so that *normalistas* coming from other Teachers Colleges could participate in the march planned for 2nd October, could have come at cross-purposes with the existence of illicit drugs (or money) in one of the buses, specifically in the *Estrella Roja* bus.

The rest of possible explanations, like the possible confusion with a group of the drug traffickers or member of organized crime is inconsistent with the degree of knowledge of the facts by the authorities, with the fact that the students were unarmed, with the circumstances of the arrival of the *normalistas* to Iguala, or with the single circumstance of punishment against the *normalistas* as a retaliation for the commandeering of buses, who does not explain the massive character of the reaction, its hostility and the generalization of scenes of direct violence against people and buses, and therefore do not contribute to understanding what happened that night. As long as complete evidence is not forthcoming, the IGIE points at all this circumstantial proof that confirms the importance of carrying out an in-depth investigation of this hypothesis, since up to the present this hypothesis is the most consistent with the violence exerted on the *normalistas*, and later against the *Los Avispones* soccer team and other people that were erroneously thought to be *normalistas*.

10. Non-protection of the *normalistas* against the attacks

The scenes of violence that night of show a panorama of defenselessness of the victims before the aggressors. This not only due to the fact that it was the municipal police, but because no other police force of the State took action in protecting the *normalistas* in spite of having knowledge of the facts or being present in some of the crime scenes when the crimes took place and in spite of the fact that they had been witnessing the level of aggression and human rights violations. The mechanisms of protection or investigation of the government of the State of Guerrero did not work either.

Between the first frontal attack with firearms carried out in Hermenegildo Galeana street (21: 30 h) and a little later in Juan N. Alvarez street (21: 45 h), and the second attack there (00: 30 h) 3 hours went by without anybody from the Office of the Public Prosecutor, nor any expert services to take care of the victims appearing there to investigate the facts or to

cover the crime scene. The only support that arrived during that time period were teachers from the Ceteg College, other students from the Ayotzinapa Teachers College some of the *normalistas* who had been told about the facts. In addition to that, these groups also became victims of the second attack, due to the ineffectiveness of the authorities.

According to the report by the Parliamentary Commission for the follow up of the investigations related to the facts that took place in Iguala, no officials either from the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Northern Region of Iguala (PGJE), nor elements of other police or security forces with presence in Iguala¹⁵ came to the aid of the *normalistas* during the time period in which the events took place (from 21:50 to just after 00:00)¹⁶. Nevertheless, it would be convenient to extend this time period until 1 a.m. (or even 3 a.m.), since the last known attack took place at 0:30 in Juan N. Alvarez street where Julio Caesar Mondragón was later arrested and tortured.

Even though the Secretariat of State Public Security alleged lack of personnel in its informative card¹⁷, the report drafted by the Commission of Enquiry for the Ayotzinapa case set up in the Congress of the Republic¹⁸ includes the declarations of the Secretary

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- 15 The Federal Traffic Police is located in the outskirts of Iguala, on the Mexico-Acapulco federal highway at km 121+300; the State Police Regional Barracks is located in the outskirts of Iguala in the Iguala-Tuxpan road, at km 15. The 27th Infantry Battalion of the SEDENA is at Periferico street S/N, within the town of Iguala.
 - 16 At 17. 59, the State Police Control Center or C-4, at Chilpancingo, reported via telephone the departure to Iguala of two “Estrella de Oro” buses with students from the Ayotzinapa Teachers College to the State Police in Iguala. The students were then monitored by the Iguala C-4 as from their arrival in town at around 20.00 hours. (Informative report card 02370 by the Regional Coordinator to the Secretary of Public Security dated 26th September 2014). It is also known that the Federal Police arrived at Km 126+700 on the Iguala-Chilpancingo federal highway to “monitor the activities of these students, whose intention was to hijack buses”. Also, the Mexican Army’s 27th Infantry Battalion Headquarters contacted the Iguala Secretary of Public Security, who, supposedly, according to the Mexican Army, downplayed the facts denying that personnel under his control had made use of their firearms. (Parliamentary Gazette, issue no. 4148-II, Official Communications, from the Special Commission to follow up the investigation related to the facts that took place in Iguala, Guerrero, to the students of the Ayotzinapa Teachers Training College, Raul Isidro Burgos. Annex II. Tuesday 4th November).
 - 17 Informative card 02370 dated 26th September 2014 from the Regional Coordinator to the Secretary of Public Security, Lic. Leonardo Vázquez Perez. Also, informative card from Lic. Juan Jose Gatica Martinez, Undersecretary of Prevention and Police Operation to Lic. Leonardo Vázquez Perez, dated 27th September 2014.
 - 18 On 7th October 2014 the House of Representatives of the Congress of the Republic created the Special Commission to follow up the investigation related to the facts that occurred in Iguala, Guerrero, to the students of the Ayotzinapa “Raul Isidro Burgos” Teachers College, presided over by Deputy Jose Guillermo Anaya Llamas, and integrated by deputies Lizbeth Eugenia Rosas, Manuel Añorve Baños, Ruth Zavaleta Salgado, Ricardo Mejía Berdeja, Lilia Aguilar Gil and Sonia Rincón Chanona. Their first report is dated 4th November 2014.

of Government of the State of Guerrero who stated that the contingency was not taken care of by the Government of the State because the Mayor of Iguala did not answer the telephone and no complaints had been lodged¹⁹. Nevertheless, Mr. Abarca indicated to the IGIE that he had been told about the facts by state officials on the phone, all of which should be investigated.

The Guerrero Delegation of the State Office for Regional Control, Penal Procedures and Legal Protection, of the Attorney General of the Republic, initiated an investigation at 21:45 h as from a call from C4, AC/PGR/GRO/IGU/1/256/2014, and as from that moment requested investigation by the Federal Police as well as by the Ministerial Federal Police. Shortly afterwards, together with the Regional Assistant Attorney General who was in Iguala, several public prosecutors and ministerial police officers departed to the town of Iguala. However, the sighting of an accident (sic) 15 kilometers before arriving at Iguala at around 00:00 hours on 27th September, delayed their arrival until past 01:00 am, part of the personnel staying to work on that accident, and the rest continued their journey to the town of Iguala. In this scene, and also according to previous inquiry report, they found the bus in which the *Los Avispones* soccer team had traveled, where the corpses of Ms. Montiel and of the young García Evangelista were removed at 01:20 am on 27th September²⁰.

11. Delays in the caring for victims

Both in the case of the crime scene of the first and second attacks at the Juan N. Alvarez and Periférico Norte street, as in the case of the bus with the *Los Avispones* soccer team, there was a considerable delay in the care provided to the victims, which entailed an even greater risk for their lives and in some cases it probably precipitated deaths or the later case evolution. In the case of Aldo Gutiérrez, victim care was delayed by the attack endured by those who tried to care for him and the lack of minimum safety conditions for the ambulances.

19 “(...) and although they had knowledge of the facts at the time they were being committed, there was no immediate action because the Mayor did not answer the telephone and there was no complaint lodged. Despite the fact that the Public Prosecutor himself later told us that they did indeed know of the facts when hospital personnel informed the Office of the Public Prosecutor. It is therefore not clear if they knew at the time (sic) the facts were committed or once these had finished”. Parliamentary Gazette, no. 4148-II, Official Communications, by the Special Commission to follow up the investigations related to the facts that occurred in Iguala, Guerrero, to the students of the Ayotzinapa, Raul Isidro Burgos Teachers College. Annex II. Tuesday 4th November.

20 Public Prosecutor of Guerrero. Previous Inquiry File HID/SC/02/0993/2014. Protocol of ocular inspection in which the corpses of Blanca Montiel Sanchez and David Josué García Evangelista were removed.

The two *normalistas* killed in the second attack were not even cared for, and they remained lying on the ground, with point-blank bullet impacts in faces and thorax. They spent over 2 hours without it even being possible to cover them, while it was raining, because the necessary personnel for removing the corpses had not arrived. In the case of the driver of the bus in which the *Los Avispones* soccer team was traveling, the transfer to hospital was delayed for over an hour and a half, and he died upon arrival at the hospital. In other cases, the lack of diligence in transferring patients and delays for an hour and a half was just about to claim the lives of at least two seriously wounded people in the attack against the *Los Avispones* bus, one of which was taken by his relatives to a private hospital after being rejected in others.

In the case of the severely wounded *normalista* Edgar Vargas, he was nearly one and a half hours in the Santa Cristina Clinic, without any kind of medical aid. According to the military patrol vehicle present at the Clinic, the ambulance had been requested since they had arrived there at 1 am, and as a result of repeated requests for victim care, it arrived at 2 am when the military patrol vehicle had already left, by which time Edgar had also been evacuated in a taxi cab. Nevertheless, the register at the Red Cross indicates that the call requesting for an ambulance took place at 1:53 am and that it only took them 7 minutes to arrive. Also, the doctor from the Clinic that had also arrived did not tend to Edgar's serious wounds.

12. Decision to carry out enforced disappearances

The perpetrators' pattern of action shows two different moments and profiles. On one hand, there is a massive and indiscriminate attack, in which the authors do not hide their identities. Beyond the use of hoods, they are municipal policemen and they act openly, although they do protect themselves under cover of darkness at night, both in the crime scene in the town centre and when leaving the town. The facts took place in front of numerous witnesses, although the perpetrators also had the power to ensure silence with a considerable level of terror being exerted and the territorial control that numerous interviewed witnesses have pointed out, in a situation in which organized crime and specifically the *Guerreros Unidos* group, the police and the various authorities had long been acting in a coordinated manner.

This fact is in contrast with other kinds of enforced disappearances in which there is a more clandestine *modus operandi* from the beginning, and which could have taken place in places where the identification of the perpetrators is more difficult, as in a highway or somewhere less accessible or less frequented. Several surviving *normalistas* even asked why they had survived, or why the wounded had been evacuated, if soon the rest were going to be made to forcibly disappear. It is probable that in this action there are numerous eyewitnesses in a street of the town (and not so in the crime scene of the *Estrella de Oro* 1531 bus at the Palace of Justice of where no wounded people were transferred to the hospital).

The massive character of the action, the considerable number of victims, the extension in so different scenes and times, the accomplishment of the action before many possible witnesses, the arrest of the *normalistas*, the use of identifiable municipal patrol cars, among other factors, seems to denote more an action oriented towards not letting the buses leave and/or punish to the *normalistas* for their commandeering the buses, than to conceal the facts from the beginning.

Denial of the disappearances tends to conceal proof that could incriminate the authors. For example, the numbers of the Cocula police patrol cars were changed and altered in an effort to eliminate any traces of their participation. The enforced disappearance of people is a strategy to eliminate all the traces of the crime, spreading confusion and ambiguity as a form of avoiding investigation, to keep the facts unknown and to remove the victims away from any form of legal protection. Forced disappearances are carried out by State agents or individuals with their support or assent, and the idea is to extend terror to all those people who could feel identified with the victims by making them fear they could suffer the same fate.

Nevertheless, the IGIE indicates that in this case there is frequently a disconnection between the first part of the operation carried out by State agents, from the second part, in which supposedly the disappeared *normalistas* are handed over to a group of members of organized crime in order to make them disappear. The disappearance cannot nevertheless be attributed to this group as if all the actions did not belong to the same operation. In the official version of the facts provided in public appearances, and in the records of the investigation, this disconnection appears quite clearly, as if they were two different crime scenes in which the police and authorities involved did not have a say on the fate of the arrested *normalistas*.

13. The fate of the disappeared and the hypothesis of the burning of corpses

Nevertheless, it does not look as if a decision of this kind can be taken immediately and without preparing the necessary infrastructure to hide the fate of such a numerous group of people. The official version emphasizes a level of organization and a type of decision by a group of criminals which does not correspond as a whole with other criminal cases in the area, be it with murders or disappearances and concealment in graves. In this case it is a very numerous group of people, who are arrested by two municipal police forces in two different places and their fate is concealed with an enormous deployment of infrastructure and capacity of coordination that is necessary to carry out such an action. On the other hand, the contradictions in the different versions of the facts, by those accused of being members of *Guerreros Unidos*, and having carried out the murders and disappearances, show to the inconsistencies in this version of what happened and the disconnection of that version with respect to the levels of decision involved in the first part of the facts.

In addition the episodes of burning of corpses previously carried out by *Guerreros Unidos* (in graves, and with firewood) left numerous pieces of proof and produce partial burning of bodies compatible with that kind of modus operandi, which allows for the identification of complete corpses which are sometimes even recognizable as complete bodies and not in that allegedly used in the case of the 43, in which they have been turned into “ashes”. The only moment documented in the records in which a group of perpetrators gathers in the hours immediately after the facts is the proven meeting in the house belonging to Gilberto Lopez Astudillo, also known as El Gil, in Loma de Coyotes or Pueblo Viejo, according to the versions. This fact could probably show a moment in which the perpetrators analyzed the consequences of the facts and discussed possible steps to take. Be it then or at another time, be it by that group of perpetrators or in coordination with other intellectual or material authors, the decision on the disappearance had its continuity with the action carried out right from the beginning.

The decision to execute such an atrocious, sophisticated and unprecedented modus operandi, and therefore without counting on the necessary directives, practice, methods, materials etc. to carry it out and to turn the *normalistas* “into ashes”, that is to say, to make them disappear to the point of turning their bodies into remains that cannot even be identified with DNA tests, similar to the calcinations that are obtained in a crematorium oven is unprecedented in terms of the place it was carried out in, nor in the modus operandi of the perpetrators of *Guerreros Unidos*, nor a motivation that corresponds to the considerable needs in terms of work, organization and adequate means to erase any kind of traces to such an extreme degree of sophistication.

The circumstances in which human remains were found mixed with ashes, earth and carbonized remains of combustible materials, and the later identification of the remains of a bone corresponding to one of the disappeared *normalistas*, shows both a pattern of concealment that comprises the crime of enforced disappearance, and the fact that at least one of the corpses of the *normalistas* was indeed incinerated. However, the conditions of this action and the versions on the facts continue being contradictory, although this report demonstrates that it is impossible for the waste dump at Cocula to be the scene of the crime, at least in the circumstances and times indicated in the investigation records.

14. It is impossible for the waste dump at Cocula to be the scene of the crime

The official version maintained until now and based on confessions of those people accused of the crime is that the final fate of the 43 *normalistas* was the Cocula waste dump where they would have been assassinated and their bodies cremated. In order to be able to carry out a technical assessment of the case, as well as of the actions carried out in the specific investigation of this episode as part of their mandate, the IGIE asked Dr. Jose

Torero²¹ to draft an independent expert appraisal. Dr. Torero is a world-renowned expert in fire research. He was commissioned to carry out field work, examine the evidence, analyze the statements made by the accused and pronounce his expert opinion according to his knowledge, experience, verification in the field and experiments undertaken in the laboratories of the University of Queensland, all of which in order to clarify three aspects: 1) the possibility of burning 43 bodies in the Cocula waste dump, in the time and the circumstances described by some of the alleged perpetrators, 2) to analyze the evidence harvesting work carried out by the experts and 3) to illustrate us about what materials would be required to get 43 bodies into an incinerated or “ash” condition.

The conclusions arrived at by Dr Torero in accordance with his skills, and which are considered pertinent to the effects of the request made by the IGIE, are as follows:

1. That there is no evidence that supports the hypothesis generated on the basis of the testimonies, according to which 43 bodies were cremated in the Cocula municipal waste dump on 27th September 2014.
2. All the evidence collected indicates that in the Cocula municipal waste dump there have only been fires of small dimensions, the duration in time of which cannot be properly defined.
3. All the collected evidence shows that the minimum necessary fire for the cremation of these bodies could not have taken place in the Cocula municipal waste dump. If there had been a fire of that magnitude, generalized damage would be visible in the vegetation and garbage. None of these elements has signs of such damage.
4. It is impossible to establish if the fires that were effectively made in the Cocula municipal waste dump were of sufficient dimensions for the incineration of one or more bodies, but there is no evidence that indicates the existence of a fire of the magnitude of a pyre for the cremation even of a single body.
5. There is no evidence that indicates that the necessary combustible charge for the cremation of bodies has at some time been available in the neighborhood of the Cocula municipal waste dump.

21 Jose Torero. Mechanical engineer from the Catholic Pontifical University of Peru, Master and Ph. D. in the University of California, Berkeley. Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering in 2014, Royal Academy of Engineering laureate in 2010 and 2008. Society of Fire Protection Engineers in 2015. Co author of the SFPE Handbook for Fire Protection Engineering, he is also the head publisher of the Fire Safety Journal, member of the publishing body of the Journal of the International Council for Tall Buildings, Architecture, Fire Technology Journal, Fire Science and Technology, Case Studies in Fire Safety Engineering and Progress in Energy and Combustion Science. In possession of the Arthur B. Guise Medal of the Fire Protection Engineering Society in 2008 and the Rasbash Medal from the United Kingdom Institution of Fire Engineers.

6. The testimonies indicate events that are not possible given the conditions generated for what would be the minimum fire necessary for the cremation of 43 bodies.
7. Dr Torero's expert appraisal also points to the scientific and technical limitations of the studies carried out until now for an investigation of this nature, and for this reason the majority of their conclusions have been mistaken and in many cases such conclusions do not emerge from the material evidence and its possible interpretation.

With all this background information previously indicated in the analysis of the versions carried out by the Group and based on the expert appraisal drafted by Dr. Torero, the IGIE has the conviction that the 43 students were not incinerated in the Cocula municipal waste dump. The confessions made by the alleged perpetrators in this point do not correspond to the reality of the evidence presented in this study.

15. Conclusion

For the IGIE all these circumstances and findings show both the insufficiencies in the investigation and the tasks that are still pending in order to provide the relatives of the victims and Mexico as a whole with the justice they are entitled to expect in this case, including an effective investigation of the different responsibilities and the elucidation of the fate of the 43 missing *normalistas* which, as we have indicated is still uncertain. These circumstances and findings also indicate what is still to be done, and the way in which the search of the disappeared and the investigation of the facts and responsibilities and also the care for the victims and relatives should be oriented in the IGIE's opinion. All such matters are part of our mandate. In the opinion of this IGIE the advances made in these months in the investigation constitute a positive step. Nevertheless the IGIE considers that there should be general reconsideration of the investigation based on the results of this research.

Recommendations reference to the investigation and research in the Ayotzinapa case

From the analysis of the records, of the suggestions made to the Procurator General of the Republic about the investigation, and the evaluation of the search process, the IGIE wishes to point out the following recommendations related to the investigation and search in the case of the *normalistas* from Ayotzinapa. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list and inevitably certain particular recommendations overlap with the general recommendations. In fact, many of the recommendations made in this section are extensive and affect general recommendations. In this manner, the IGIE wishes to contribute to successful efforts both to clarify the facts and to punish those responsible and to locate the whereabouts of the disappeared *normalistas*.

Investigation

1. Unification of the investigation.

The authorities should continue unifying investigations so that there is a comprehensive view of the facts; so that the meeting between the victims, their families and their legal representatives is not made more difficult; so that distances are shortened and victims' access to justice is facilitated, avoiding situations of lack of safety and ensuring an adequate approach to the process.

It is necessary to avoid the risk of loss of evidence for related facts and it is necessary to have a procedural accumulation in order to investigate and judge the Ayotzinapa facts comprehensively. This is essential to avoid fragmentation and it highlights the importance of taking into account the pattern of action, its context and connections between the committed crimes, which is considered key to determining responsibilities and *modus operandi*. The investigations should be focused and be carried out by competent and accessible judges.

2. Taking other human rights violations and crimes into consideration

It is necessary to adequately investigate other serious human rights violations and crimes that took place in this case, including: 1) homicides by shooting at close range, 2) torture, and other circumstances of death (in the case of Julio Cesar Mondragon Fontes) 3) attempted homicides, 4) concealment, obstruction of justice and abuse of authority, 5) improper use of force, 6) injuries and threats suffered by surviving *normalistas*.

3. Conducting pending processes and procedures

Obtain all the witness statements requested by the IGIE and which still have not been carried out together with expert appraisals that are also still pending, such as that

on telephone communications and others, the confrontation of ballistics evidence gathered with other existing weapons in the record and with weapons of other security services like the Cocula police as well as comparisons between the DNA found in samples collected on buses or clothing with the genetic profiles of the victims and their families.

Conduct a thorough investigation of the telephone reports from both victims and the accused for the crimes that took place on 26th and 27th September 2014.

4. Investigate the possible transport of narcotics

Investigate a mobile transfer of narcotics as a priority to determine the cause that triggered the aggression against the *normalistas*. To this end, information should be compared with that in possession of judicial and government authorities at an international level. It is also necessary to accurately identify the Red Star bus.

5. Investigate allegations of ill-treatment or torture with due guarantees

Investigate any allegations of torture against suspected perpetrators with the participation of independent experts.

6. Perform a second autopsy of Julio César Mondragon Fontes

Perform a new autopsy of Julio César Mondragon Fontes, with participation of experts from the Procurator General of the Republic and the Argentine Team of Forensic Experts, in accordance with the family's wishes.

7. Reconsider certain elements of the investigation of the case

Reconsider some of the assumptions of the case and lines of investigation on the basis of the findings provided by the IGIE.

Responsibilities

8. Determine other responsibilities

Investigate whether the actions of all the security forces present at the events were consistent with the law and if they fulfilled their respective protocols, especially reference to their obligation to protect citizens.

9. Investigate other possible perpetrators

Investigate all possible suspects who might have participated in the events according to the testimonies and other substantiating evidence. Research carried out by the IGIE has provided new elements in that regard.

10. Carry out new arrests

Arrest the highest-level suspects such as Felipe Flores Velasquez, the Iguala Secretary of Public Security at the time of the facts, Gildardo López Astudillo alias “El Cabo Gil” and Alejandro Tenescalco Mejia, a former member of the municipal police as soon as possible, and place them immediately at the disposal of the judicial authorities.

11. Investigate the suspects’ assets

Investigate the assets belonging the suspects in the case, their legal origin, if they matches with their revenue profile, whether there have been transactions of goods between them or with others, and whether they have used straw men or other fraudulent maneuvers to hide their assets and properties.

12. Investigate a possible obstruction of the investigation

Investigate all public officials who have obstructed the investigation of the Ayotzinapa case.

Search

13. Continue with the search processes

Continue with the search processes by following the agreements with the Federal Police in the operational actions, and follow the jointly-established criteria for such operations, as a result of good offices by the IGIE.

14. Examine other places compatible with cremated remains

In the context of evaluating all possible fates of the disappeared *normalistas* because of the discovery of cremated remains identified as corresponding to one of the missing *normalistas*, and because of the need to take into account all possible fates of the *normalistas*, investigate the existence and possible use of cremation ovens in public and private institutions in the cities of Iguala and Cocula, or others that might have been available for the perpetrators in order to evaluate all the circumstances and possible links with the facts.

15. Update the map of graves and the investigation of cases of other disappeared people in Iguala

Constantly update the map of graves of corpses and skeletal remains found in Iguala and surrounding areas, so that this information contributes to finding clues that can help carry out new searches for the disappeared *normalistas*. The search for graves can be reinforced by using laser technology (LIDAR) to identify perturbations in the field in locations near Pueblo Viejo, La Parota and their surroundings. The cooperation of forensic experts from Argentine Team of Forensic Experts and the Procurator General

of the Republic is fundamental for a positive result in such efforts and techniques, and to obtain more reliable results and confidence.

16. Incorporate satellite photographs and search technology into the investigation

The IGIE reiterates its request to have wider and better quality satellite images of the various places where the facts related to the investigation took place from the National Center for Planning, Analysis and Information for Combating Crime (CENAPI) and other institutions.

Care for victims

17. Implementing the recommendations on care for relatives and other victims

The authorities should implement the recommendations regarding care for victims in legal, social, psychosocial, medical and health aspects and protective measures as presented by the IGIE so that they are put into practice by Secretariat of Governance and the Executive Commission for the Care of Victims, in coordination with other federal and state entities.

18. Consolidate reporting mechanisms and relationships with relatives and other victims

The authorities should maintain stable mechanisms of information, communication and liaison with the families, victims and representatives in the case that can ensure relationships of trust and understanding with the various state authorities.

19. Reform and fulfill the collaboration agreements and other State commitments

The authorities should respect and promote agreements regarding the search for the disappeared *normalistas* from Ayotzinapa, as well as agreements on the management of information and other aspects that have been defined between the families of the disappeared, their representatives and the highest authorities of Mexico in October 2014.

20. Consider protection and prevention measures

Assess and enhance security measures as well as an effective investigation into the threats against witnesses linked to the case.

What I can say right now, wherever my brother is, is that he should hang on there with all his strength; that we shall find him soon. And if my brother returns alive, I shall be very happy, together with my son, my wife, and all of my family.

I will thank God and all the people who have supported us. Even if he has lost his life, I shall also be thanking everybody. But I need to be positive as long as there is no proof. I have to be there with their parents and continue with the struggle, and find them.