Youths' disappearance turns Oaxaca magic town into tragic town

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Relatives of the missing say the disappearances started when the mayor took office last December

The disappearance of seven young men has turned Huautla, Oaxaca, from a magic town to a tragic town in the last eight months.

The first to disappear from this Magical Town in Oaxaca's Sierra Mazateca was Fausto Ríos, who was taking surveys for the government when he last seen on December 5, 2018. The most recent cases are those of Iván and Efrén Martínez, two brothers who disappeared on July 31.

Ríos' mother, María Mendoza, told the newspaper *Reforma* that her son left her a voicemail on the day he disappeared, saying that he was fine, but he could not talk to her at the time.

"A lot of young people have been taken away, there is a lot of crime here, it's not a magical town, because people are taking our children away and we don't know why," she said. "We want them back, alive."

Residents of Huautla, many of whom depend on offering services to visitors, are living in fear because of the recent wave of crime.

"This started when the current mayor, Óscar Peralta Allende, took office, and he's not helping us at all," said Mendoza. "When we ask him for help, he says he doesn't have a magic wand to say 'here's your son.' A mayor shouldn't say a thing like that, he should talk to those of us who are in pain because our sons have disappeared."

Susana Cerqueda, whose brother Juan Cerqueda went missing on June 15, said family members have not been asked for ransom payments. They also take place in broad daylight.

". . . the disappearances have happened in the center of Huautla, out in the open," she said. "When we made the report, coincidentally, the municipality's security cameras weren't working that day . . . people here in Huautla are afraid to talk because they've been threatened and we, family members, have been threatened by municipal officials who are close to the mayor."

The municipality is known for being the birthplace of indigenous healer María Sabina.

Source: [Reforma](#) (sp)