

# The Boricua-Macheteros Popular Army

## Origins, Program, and Struggle

*Introduction by*  
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*Introduction:* The last decade of the nineteenth century brought a dramatic transformation of a revolutionary republic guided by profound social demands into a neocolonialist and imperialist nation. The United States entered the international sphere as a country that was to establish the political and economic agenda for the rest of the world. The sinking of the battleship USS *Maine*—an event that was denounced as self-provoked—was the pretext used to declare war on a weakened Spain, a nation that at that time held sovereignty over the islands of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and—in the Pacific—the Philippines. In 1898 the United States government ordered its already powerful navy to invade Puerto Rican territory, and this was accomplished after the relentless bombing of San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico. This event marked the beginning of the implementation of a classic colonial policy in Puerto Rico, something that the United States was unable to do in Cuba or the Philippines.

At the time, Puerto Rico had several insurgent parties (one of them named Los Macheteros, the origin of the name of the Boricua-Macheteros Popular Army) with distinctive objectives. While some were dedicated to obtaining benefits through acts that were not in the best political and social interests of Puerto Ricans, others demanded, along with the recognition of their social rights, respect for the human and civil rights of Puerto Ricans and freedom for Puerto Rico. Many months before the invasion, Puerto Rico had managed to achieve political autonomy after decades of anticolonial struggle and negotiation with the Spanish monarchy. One of the most important components of the political pact signed between the people of Puerto Rico and Spain made it very clear that it could not be unilaterally altered by either party. Therefore, no political modification could be imposed by Spain without the

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clear consent of the Puerto Rican people. It has been demonstrated by experts in international law that the Treaty of Paris, signed between the United States and Spain in 1898, constituted a violation of that pact. In effect, the treaty constituted a military seizure of the sovereignty that legitimately belonged to the Puerto Rican people through a transfer of their territory and the people of Puerto Rico to the United States.

These events reaffirmed the right—already claimed for more than a century—of the Puerto Rican people to national independence and the complete exercise of its sovereignty. The political administration of Puerto Rico by the United States during the first years of its misappropriation of our national territory was assigned to the military forces of occupation. These forces immediately began attempting to destroy the national identity of the Puerto Rican people, its culture, traditions, and language, while exercising total control over the national economy, the ideological superstructure, the communication media, the educational institutions, and all of the agencies responsible for establishing the norms for the nation's life.

This aggression forced the more conscious sectors of the Puerto Rican people to organize in an effort to save the nation. Throughout the decades that followed the invasion, Puerto Ricans have struggled by all the means available to them for freedom and justice. The defense of the culture has constituted a bastion of tireless struggle. The defense of our language, our traditions, our folklore, and our patriotic values has become central to the efforts of the people to ensure their own survival. Armed struggle has been indispensable because it represents in itself the right of any colonized country to struggle for its independence. The right to engage in armed struggle was made a reality and a central principle by Albizu Campos and his heroic Nationalist party. The government of the United States is very familiar with the “Revolution of 1950” and the nationalist commando attacks not only on Blair House in 1950 but also on the U.S. Congress in 1954.

True to our tradition of struggle, the Boricua-Macheteros Popular Army was established in 1978 after a profound analysis of our political reality. The two decades that preceded its founding were years of deep political repression for all sectors identified with the independence of the nation. They were years in which the Federal Bureau of Investigation maintained files on about 150,000 Puerto Ricans. Political assassinations, carried out under the instructions of someone who is currently the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Washington, Carlos Romero Barcelo,<sup>1</sup> were part of Puerto Ricans' daily life. The Macheteros are the product of a process that developed over several decades. A number of revolutionary organizations had already made an appearance, among them the Movimiento Independentista Revolucionario en Armas (Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement—MIRA), the

Comandos Armados de Liberación (Armed Commandos for Liberation—CAL), the Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Popular (Armed Forces of Popular Resistance—FARP), and the Organización de Voluntarios para la Revolución Puertorriqueña (Volunteers' Organization for Puerto Rican Revolution—OVRP), all of which had resorted to arms in an attempt to achieve Puerto Rico's independence.

The struggle of Puerto Rican revolutionaries framed by the Macheteros is directed not against the people of the United States but against the implementation of a colonial policy directed and imposed by the rulers of the United States, who, in turn, represent powerful economic interests that constitute the true power behind the facade. The popular sectors in the United States, which constitute the majority of the American people, are largely unaware of this situation.

During the 22 years of existence of the Macheteros, we have defended, with real sacrifice, our rights to independence and freedom not only as people but also as part of a population that has suffered the abuses of an economic, political, and social system replete with injustice and exploitation. We have exercised our rights by attacking the military forces of occupation and oppression that are now established in our land, destroying their combat planes on their military bases, and attacking their military installations and the infrastructure that serves their armed forces on our territory. At the same time, we have been fiercely repressed. More than 300 agents of the FBI and other repressive agencies of the United States have been sent to our country to pursue patriots and conduct massive detentions. Many Macheteros have been incarcerated in federal prisons in the United States, separated from their relatives and their land.

Although Macheteros have suffered the most intense repression, we have always reemerged, and we remain on a war footing. Our strength today is greater than ever. Only final victory, that is, the independence of our fatherland, without manipulation or neocolonial political maneuvers by the government of the United States of America, will bring real peace. The people of the United States, whom we consider strategic allies of real peace and harmony in the world, have nothing to fear from the Macheteros. It is those people, lovers of justice and peace, whom we ask through this medium to demand from their government the beginning of a true process of self-determination for Puerto Rico, always oriented by the established norms of international law and the United Nations.

The document that we present here is part of our collective analysis and was elaborated within our organization, and we publish it in order to make our convictions known to all of the continent's activists, academics, and combatants. We hope that the political program of the Macheteros will be useful

in promoting the study of the national, regional, and global conditions of the Puerto Rican people.

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## THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

### NEOLIBERALISM AND GLOBALIZATION

Philosophically speaking, and in terms of idealist concepts, liberalism is a doctrine that reaffirms the primacy of individual freedom.<sup>2</sup> It is, in reality, the maximum expression of the false concepts of “freedom” fabricated by the dominant neoliberal sectors of the current economic system and tailored to serve their interests. Liberalism proposes minimal state intervention, leaving the whole socioeconomic structure, based upon private property, in the hands of the capitalist sectors that are economically predominant. This is, in reality, simply the imposition of the notions of “freedom” that the exploiters need to guarantee the implementation and supremacy of the system of inequalities and privileges to the detriment of the neediest sectors of society. The neoliberals, clearly a minority, are the ones who exercise all the power given to them by the state and the laws they themselves have created. This is a power employed, through coercion and force, against the countless majorities known as “humanity.”

It is this philosophy that has guided the U.S. nation from its foundation to the present. Neoliberalism is nothing more than the adaptation of this philosophy of injustice and exploitation to the current conditions in the hope that all of humanity will be guided by its apparent consensual acceptance by a cast of financiers and owners of the means of production. This is simply the equivalent of private property’s ruling the world and established governments’ serving as administrators to resolve the difficulties that may emerge in the course of this process of death and slavery.

Neoliberalism—the name given to the most recent economic expression of capitalism, which has profound political, economic, and social implications—is guided by a line of practical orientation through which it depends upon significant and highly coordinated development of international commerce directed by the highly industrialized nations. Consequently, all nations, and particularly underdeveloped ones, find themselves forced to eliminate the duties established by law to “protect” their production and its markets. This political and economic project, complemented by mechanisms oriented to the consolidation of these policies, constitutes the most recent alternative that international capitalism is imposing on the world’s community.

These neoliberal policies have taken the planet by surprise and created deep anguish in the vast majority of the world's population. As commercial and productive globalization for the benefit of the wealthiest is developed, there is, on a global level, a tremendous parallel increase of unemployment and lack of health services, drinkable water, basic nutrition, education, housing, and so forth. At the same time, using "development" as a reason, there has been a worsening of the criminal assault on the environment with devastating effects for humanity and the very existence of our planet.

One of the goals of the neoliberal strategists of globalization is breaking down the protectionist barriers that poor nations have established as defenses against the unbridled assault of capital coming from the wealthy and highly developed countries. The international banking system is at the service of these financial sectors. The concrete result of this aggressive economic policy dictated by the international financial institutions for poor peoples is the loss of sovereignty. This usurpation is imposed through the implementation of restrictive strangling policies with regard to the foreign debt of underdeveloped nations. The imposition of unsustainable conditions on the nations that already owe them enormous amounts and whose payments—just for the interest, not counting the repayment of the principal—consume the majority of national incomes destined to alleviate the inhuman conditions of the population is the norm for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America suffer the heartrending consequences of this situation.

The Caribbean region—the only one with a socialist state—deserves particular attention. For Puerto Rico, this region is its immediate political and socioeconomic context. For the world and particularly for the United States, it represents a significant internal market in addition to being an area of intense commercial, financial, and industrial activity. During this latest process of globalization, the Caribbean states have established regional institutions such as the Association of Caribbean States and CARICOM that enable them to dissent and develop a variety of policies for their economic well-being in relation to neoliberal globalization.

While the so-called socialist bloc was in existence, neoliberalism was the unifying factor among the highly developed nations united in a coalition known as the Group of 7 (although there were more than seven). It was this group that determined and coordinated the counterrevolutionary policies of the global economy and the repressive policies toward those who adopted challenging positions. Neoliberalism was useful to them as a theoretical framework for the development of those policies, which included, among others, intelligence operations, infiltration, regional wars, the repression of progressive forces around the world, and the destruction of organized revolutionary

movements. In the current historical phase, after the disappearance of the socialist world, neoliberalism is assaulting the entire planet. Now it no longer has the opposition of a socializing system that was a clear alternative to the global reorientation for human survival. Nevertheless, the impoverishment of the affected populations, who responded combatively to the injustice of the implementation of this model, demonstrates its failure as an option for the majority of humanity.

Neoliberalism, as a determinant ideological factor for the strategy of counterrevolutionary economic action, has a variety of mechanisms that constitute practical and coercive policies for pursuing their goals. These mechanisms are oriented toward the penetration of all levels and sites of the organization of a society. In order to accomplish this, both the areas of material production and distribution and the superstructural ones, particularly those of ideological orientation, are transformed into mechanisms that will ensure the control of society. Globalization, privatization, concentration, and military coordination involve the imposition of policies clearly directed toward exercise of absolute control by transnational corporations and detrimental to the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

So-called globalization, for example, requires the imposition of countless changes among nations and changes in the norms that have traditionally ruled the relations between wage earners and owners. The clear result of these impositions is the reduction of the great majority of the world's population to inhuman levels of survival. To this end there has been an implementation at the international level of a process of deregulation that amounts to a loss of the rights historically achieved by workers through enormous sacrifices, imprisonments, and blood. This process of deregulation, along with an emphasis on the application of high technology, has dramatically reduced the need for hand labor. As a consequence, there has been a reduction in manufacturing employment and in the means directly related to the production of wealth, impoverishing larger sectors of the population. The exclusion of the broad masses of the workforce emerges as a natural by-product of these neoliberal economic impositions and adjustments.

The imposition of changes in work hours and the elimination of overtime pay, the rights acquired by women workers, vacation benefits, and so forth, along with other impositions, have meant an enormous loss of the human and democratic rights historically acquired by workers through painstaking reivindicative struggles. The explanations offered by the "masters" are that employment markets have to be less rigid, turning the competition for jobs into something much more crucial.

As a response to the draconian policies guided by the concept of globalization, the people subjected to the most abject misery as a consequence of

superexploitation have developed a variety of survival mechanisms, from education to strikes and from the coordination of multinational efforts to direct confrontation, to impede the imposition of these new mechanisms of human exploitation. To a great extent, these struggles have been promoted by what is called "civil society," which is nothing but the people united, without regard for traditional forms, and which is currently relegated to a less prominent role.

In this direction, there has been an implementation of policies directed toward the confrontation with the neoliberal trend in our country, one that today affects all of the underdeveloped nations on the planet.

#### **U.S. RESTRUCTURING OF CAPITALISM AND ITS APPLICATION TO PUERTO RICO**

Although the restructuring of capitalism is a reality for all of the underdeveloped countries with which we are in fraternal relations, in our country there is an effort to dispossess the workers of important achievements. Privatization, a neoliberal policy through which all of the basic services and strategic public corporations are auctioned off to the highest capitalist bidder, has already wreaked havoc in our country. We still remember the efforts that our people made to avoid what was clearly a measure adopted by the local government: the privatization of Puerto Rico's telephone company.

#### **NEOLIBERAL PEACE AND WAR**

The new politics of neoliberalism has two stages. The first, in the political-economic sphere, consists of the total subordination of all of the underdeveloped nations of the world to one of the nations that make up the spheres of influence and economic primacy of the privileged developed world and are allies in the implementation of these neoliberal policies. In order to accomplish this, they have imposed "jungle-like" policies that inexorably submerge underdeveloped countries in misery. The basic elements that guarantee survival are disappearing: employment, as a main source of income for the majority of population, is diminishing drastically; health services are either nonexistent or extremely expensive; the availability of drinking water is reduced; the cost of living is increasing dramatically; and misery and dependency are growing. The public debt to which the reactionary governments subject their people through corruption and plundering of the few goods that they produce is at the mercy of the International Monetary Fund and is transformed into an additional scourge for the poor and working population. In order to be able to implement these economic policies, they need to maintain

public “order,” and they spare no effort to repress any peaceful demonstration that the people develop against the continuity of these conditions of modern slavery.<sup>3</sup>

The second aspect is the maintenance of highly trained military and paramilitary forces oriented toward repression. This, as has been clearly demonstrated, has become a requirement for these criminals who pride themselves on being profoundly democratic. As a legitimizing element they offer the excuse that they are forced to organize these military units because of the need to combat drug trafficking and crime or to “defend democracy,” but these are ills that are a consequence of the very same capitalist system, and they deny this. Nevertheless, this policy of localized repression, for which they use the repressive forces of each country subjected to their neoliberal and globalization policies or their highly military mechanisms and great technological power, is not limited to these spheres.

The neoliberals, with their “chief of staff,” the president of the United States, are now implementing a policy of devastating warfare against any nation that is or may become an obstacle to their project of absolute globalization and the incorporation of the world’s population under the yoke of international capitalists. One can already see them as a highly fascist world government, completely counter to the purpose of the United Nations. Naturally, this international organization is constituted primarily by nations in which poverty dominates, and because of that it is not inappropriate for them to subject their policies to the “democratic” scrutiny of this international organization; they cannot risk a veto in the Security Council. Therefore, the threat of subjecting people to the cruelty of bombs dropped from the sky is an everyday thing for the powerful neoliberals. The peace they look for is nothing else but dominating all of humanity and in this way being able to increase slavery to levels never previously conceived. In our country we experience clear examples of this reality every day.

#### **STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC CHANGES AND THEIR APPLICATION IN PUERTO RICO**

The government of Puerto Rico, under the modern dictatorship of Pedro Juan Roselló González,<sup>4</sup> is an active part of the U.S. government’s reactionary neoliberal policy. Roselló has been assigned the interregional function of representing the economic and financial interests of the United States through the establishment and strengthening of programs of trade and exchange of services with many Caribbean nations, particularly in the training of technical personnel specialized in various areas of technology and economics. The submissiveness of these traitors has exceeded any limits to



which the traditional colonialism of the “backyard” has accustomed us. Although in the past the government’s subservient philosophy was centered on the idea of Puerto Rico as “the bridge between the United States of America and the nations of South America,” at present what is expected from Puerto Rico is to conceal its intention of undermining any possibility of economic success and welfare for the Latin American nations. It is a North-South connection that is destructive and dangerous for our America. This government, embarrassed as it is about its roots, would like to mold all Latin American nations in its own image: depersonalized and full of complexes.

Given this situation, Roselló does not limit himself to the administration of the colony but is attempting to turn himself into a “statesman” of the turning over of the Latin American region to the metropolitan power. At the same time, he makes every effort to implement the destruction of any sense of nationality or any attempt to strengthen Puerto Ricanness, the aim being to eliminate the essential structures for the development and consolidation of a possible free country. Globalization has been a godsend for him. We need only quote Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States, in 1913, when the globalization process, although not identified as such, had already begun: “We have heard talk of concessions made by Latin America to foreign capital but not of concessions made by the United States to the capital of other countries. . . . This is just that we don’t give concessions. . . . A country is possessed and dominated by the capital that has been invested in it” (quoted by Galeano, 1973). In other words, a country whose nationals lack control over their autonomous economic development will gradually lose the bases of its existence and its essential liberties as a people.

With the development of the strategic globalization process, the colonialism we suffer is not eliminated but intensified. This is because not only do we lack the power to defend ourselves against this great threat but also the possibilities of our acquiring the indispensable freedom, independence, and power to become the determining factor in our life as a nation and to establish defenses for our nation are rapidly disappearing. The conditions calling for a more diligent struggle using all the means available to us, prioritizing armed struggle, not only have not disappeared in this “new reality” but have become even more indispensable.

#### **INDEPENDENCE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF GLOBALIZATION**

It has already been very well expressed by the revolutionary strategists of our America, particularly by the president of Cuba, Fidel Castro Ruíz, that globalization is an inexorable process and, in the end, a positive one. But the globalization of the capitalists is deeply destructive and could lead to the

extinction of humanity. As do others, we believe that there can be no just and egalitarian globalization without the equal participation of underdeveloped nations and the poor. The globalization of the capitalists is the globalization of slavery. Humanist globalization, in contrast, is the globalization of justice, material equality, and rights for all of humanity. For globalization to be fair for all Puerto Ricans, independence is vital; otherwise, we will not only end up as slaves but also disappear as a nation.

### **THE NATIONAL CONTEXT**

Many factors need to be taken into account in developing a revolutionary program for our country and our people. The following are those we consider most significant:

#### **POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL WEAKNESS OF THE PRO-INDEPENDENCE SECTOR**

The independence movement is very weak in ideological development. We should not make the mistake of blaming this on any limitations of consciousness or capacity to understand the theoretical aspects on the part of our people. We cannot continue repeating that our people are “alienated” or “ignorant” or “indifferent to freedom” or, worse, “born to be slaves.” These are expressions that we sometimes repeat out of frustration but that do not even remotely represent reality.

We must remember that our people, in spite of the intrusion of the U.S. government to take away our national and Caribbean identity, have survived and prospered, and from them have emerged mass struggles and acts of sublime heroism. These people are precisely our trenches for struggle.

Their apparent indifference to the patriotic project is a product of a multiplicity of factors. Nevertheless, the crucial issue is that the colonialist enemy has employed a policy of destroying of the possibilities for autonomous economic development, directing its strategy strictly toward the weakening or elimination of all the productive elements that people need to have a sense of security about their survival. This policy has been accompanied by intense propaganda aimed at deepening in people’s consciousness a sense of impotence, dependence, and instability. At the same time, we have been subjected to massive campaigns of destructive ideological transculturation that have created enormous disruptions and disorientation. These policies have been skillfully applied through a virtually monopolistic penetration of the means of ideological production directed toward the distortion of national

consciousness and the weakening of feelings of nationhood and Puerto Ricanness.

We all know that the dominant ideological superstructure in the colony has the function of not only maintaining the status quo but also serving as a spearhead for creating the subjective conditions of acceptance of their neoliberal project. Nevertheless, we cannot forget that the social relations that emerge from the colonialist capitalist structures impose their whole distorted worldview, establishing a cult of individualism (which has nothing to do with individuality) as the highest of human aspirations, and have been able to transform this false idea into a central motivation for all human beings.

Although many of these aspects are realities that are recognized by the majority of Puerto Rican fighters, we cannot avoid addressing what has been our own responsibility and has helped the oppressor gradually to gain terrain. Many factors have worked in this direction. What *independentistas* censure as “division” is an important element, but we have been unable to identify the reasons for this division. Division needs to be explained, and we need to approach this question, albeit superficially, in this document.

There is no division without a cause, and the most powerful ones are those that are rooted in particular interests of a classist nature. These are causes that have high ideological content and divide peoples. We *independentistas* are not immune to the classist formation and deformation of the socioeconomic system that frames us. Nor are we separated from the interests, be they material or ideological, that define our political aspirations for a free country. We cannot isolate ourselves from the effects of a society oriented toward alienation, consumerism, individualism, and elitism. Many *independentistas* are businessmen and capitalists, and in this fact we can already find a factor of ideological differentiation and, as a consequence, a division regarding political and economic ends. Other comrades have surrendered to the egocentric trends that the system, with its cult of unrestrained individualism, fosters, and they cannot give up their positions with regard to what they consider unacceptable ideas when the reality is that they are not in a position to open up their consciousness to propositions that they have not developed themselves. A few others may be motivated by simple personal rebelliousness and other psychological factors.

All of this does not mean that there are no elements with the potential to become unifying factors, in particular the conditions that we suffer as people struggling for independence and social justice. Our conceptions must, in the first place, contribute toward the unification of all of those who believe in the independence of our country while respecting the differences motivated by classist realities. Comrades who believe that independence can be achieved through the institutional mechanisms of the system must be respected as

companions in the struggle and, besides, tactical allies with strategic possibilities that remain to be identified. Equally, we must struggle against deformative deviations without denying the possibility of rectification of mistakes of a divisionist nature (not opening the doors wide, however, until the signals for rectification are unequivocal). In addition, we must be open to constant self-evaluation rather than arrogantly and categorically asserting that we are the exclusive carriers of truth.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, we can establish with certainty that our promotion of a truly unitary process could very well lie in our capability to interpret the concepts just mentioned, in the elimination of antagonistic prejudices, and in the careful application of norms. This has been our procedure up to now, and it has had good results. But even so, it is more important for us to understand the importance of the implementation of policies for the practical work and for actions of armed propaganda that have the real possibility of fostering unity. This will be the result when the people feel that the activities being carried out represent their feelings and needs. It is these activities of formative revolutionary action (which include written and armed propaganda) that are capable of gradually generating a unity of the popular masses in relation to the concept of the struggle that has been put into practice.

From these perspectives, our insertion into the unitary process, just like our provocation of unitary feelings of the masses, would be the result of two concepts: first, to develop the capacity to generate strategic and tactical alliances whenever these are really necessary (avoiding the “tittle-tattle” that has caused so much damage to the cause) and, second, to develop the capability to carry out armed propaganda actions that are coherent and consistent with our written propaganda and in accord with our capacity to understand the sentiment of the popular sectors in relation to the problems that affect them and to channel them toward active support of the process.

Although these unitary concepts are an important part of our ideas, it is necessary that we internalize, as deeply unitarian project, two aspects: our policy for integral action and our ideological identification with the Puerto Rican working sector oriented toward its revolutionary mobilization in the direction of the struggle for independence and in relation to class reivindications. We need to be aware that civil society and particularly the working class carry upon their shoulders the possibility of survival not only of our people but also of humanity. To ensure its development, our policy for action has to take as a point of departure the integration of our politics, framed within our reality and with the avant-garde sectors mentioned above.

The fundamental elements of our actions are all of the struggles guided by the defense of acquired and reivindicative rights, against globalization and

against neoliberal privatization, against militarism, in favor of human rights, of women, and of all of the activities oriented toward the preservation of our planet and our environment, in favor of our youth, against corruption, in favor of adequate and low-cost services for the neediest, and against the criminality that now takes the lives of our youth, as well as the other struggles for social justice that constitute an integral part of our conception of struggle. We are convinced that all of this will ultimately lead to the long-term revolutionary unity and formative, libertarian, and revolutionary solidarity that will be the necessary base for the constitution of a free country.

### NOTES

1. Note by the translator: The current Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Washington is Aníbal Acevedo Vila of the Popular Democratic party.

2. The *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* says that it is “a theory in economics emphasizing individual freedom from restraint and usually based on free competition, the self-regulating market, and the gold standard.”

3. Puerto Rico has more than 1 armed policeman for every 81 Puerto Ricans, as contrasted with 1 for every 400 Nicaraguans under Somoza’s dictatorship, and 137,000 files on subversives (1 for every 4 Puerto Ricans) in comparison with 1 file for every 350 Spaniards under Franco’s dictatorship.

4. Note by the translator: Roselló is no longer governor of Puerto Rico. The current governor is Sila María Calderón of the Popular Democratic party.

### REFERENCE

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