

Ingeborg Denissen ~ Negotiating Urban Citizenship. The Urban Poor, Brokers and the State in Mexico City and Khartoum

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Mexico City, 26 June 2008: “We are merchants, not criminals”. These words mark the banners of the protestors on Mexico City’s central square (Zócalo). Hundreds of merchants from the “El Salado” market in Iztapalapa have come in busses to protest against the government operations in their market. A month earlier, the authorities had entered the market with more than 500 police officers to check the licences of the merchants and forcing them to register. The authorities claimed

that around eighty percent of the merchandise was stolen or pirated, including stolen car parts and even weapons. Merchants claimed their right to work.

Although the Department of Public Security’s main reason for the operation was to promote security in the area, that of the local government was “to break with the

corporativism that ruled the market and to have the merchants pay taxes to the government instead of fees to their local leaders”.

Khartoum, 8 May 2008: dozens of army vehicles entered the squatter area of Soba Aradi to relocate the population without prior notice. Riots broke out in the neighbourhood as the residents refused to mount the vehicles. After a police officer posted in the area accidentally shot a child, the police office was set on fire by an angry crowd, killing at least eight police officers. Twenty-four people died because of the riots, and many were held in prison without due process. Public outrage particularly turned against the popular committee in the neighbourhood, with the official body of citizen representation seen as complicit in the government relocation plan.

Read full text (PDF-format): <http://dspace.library.uu.nl:8080/handle/1874/288516>