



# Militarization and Violence in Chiapas

Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace  
(CONPAZ)

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center

Coalition of Civil Organizations for Democracy  
(Convergencia)

38

# Militarization and Violence in Chiapas

Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace  
(CONPAZ)

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center

Coalition of Civil Organizations for Democracy  
(Convergencia)



**Research:**

Coordinación de Organismos no Gubernamentales por la Paz de Chiapas (CONPAZ)  
Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray  
Bartolomé de Las Casas  
Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la  
Democracia

**Photography:**

Files: Coordinación de Organismos no Gubernamentales  
por la Paz de Chiapas (CONPAZ)  
Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray  
Bartolomé de Las Casas

**English Translation:** Sunita Chethik, Global Exchange.

**English Translation revised by:**

The Center for Research, Education and Action (CREA, Inc.)

**Chief editor:** Mario B. Monroy Gómez

**Design:** Ma. Gabriela Castro Soto

**Publisher by:**

Servicios Informativos Procesados, A.C. (SIPRO)

**English edition:** June, 1997

**Printed by *Impretei***

Made in México.

Printed in recycled paper.

This book is a co-edition by:

**Centro de Información y Análisis de Chiapas (CIACH)**

Flavio A. Paniagua 107, Colonia Barrio Guadalupe

C.P. 29230, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas.

Telephone and fax: (967) 86581

Email: ciach@laneta.apc.org

**Coordinación de Organismos no Gubernamentales por  
la Paz de Chiapas (CONPAZ)**

Yajalón 47, Colonia 14 de Septiembre

C.P. 29210, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas.

Telephone and fax: (967) 86977

Email: conpaz@laneta.apc.org

**Servicios Informativos Procesados A.C. (Sipro)**

Medellín 33, Planta Baja, Colonia Roma

C.P. 06700 México, D.F.

Telephone: (5) 514-8453 Fax: (5) 514-65-39

Email: sipro@laneta.apc.org

© Sipro-CIACH.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter I: Civilian Observations Regarding the Effects of Militarization</b>	<b>3</b>
Statement from the Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ)	5
Towards Conditions for Dialogue in Chiapas	7
Results of the Observations Carried Out by Members of Civil Society on June 1 and 2, 1996, in the Conflict Zone in Chiapas	9
Report from the Group of Civilian Observers on the Ocosingo-Taniperlas Route	13
Report from the Group of Civilian Observers on the San Cristóbal-Oventic-San Andrés Route	15
Report on the Visit to the Cerro Hueco Prison and the Municipal Auditorium in Tuxtla Gutiérrez	17
Report by the Group of Civilian Observers Regarding the Cerro Hueco Prison and the Displaced Persons from Bachajón in Tuxtla Gutiérrez	21
The Situation in the Northern Zone of Chiapas	23
Report by the Group of Civilian Observers on the Ocosingo-Sabanilla Route	25
Report by the Group of Civilian Observers on the Palenque-Roberto Barrios Route	29
Report by the Group of Civilian Observers Regarding San Quintín	31

<b>Chapter II :</b> Civilian Observations Regarding Violence in the Northern Region of Chiapas	33
The situation in the Northern Region of Chiapas	35
The Northern Zone of Chiapas: A Latent Civil War	37
Ungovernability in the North of Chiapas (Part I)	39
Ungovernability in the North of Chiapas (Part II)	42
<b>Chapter III:</b> Opinions and Analysis	45
Hunger in Chiapas <i>Miguel Angel Granados Chapa</i>	47
The Cost of War <i>Antonio García de León</i>	49
Northern Chiapas: Dozens of Communities Living in Civil War <i>Hermann Bellinghausen</i>	51
Chiapas: A Bloody Harvest <i>Luis Hernández Navarro</i>	53
An Undeclared War <i>David Fernández</i>	55
<b>Chapter IV:</b> Chronology of the Militarization, Paramilitarization and Assassinations in Chiapas: January - June 1996	61
<b>Chapter V:</b> Facts about Chiapas	81
<b>Glossary</b>	89

## Introduction to the English Edition

This book records the first organized citizen observation of the violent militarization process in Chiapas. The events recorded here were witnessed one year ago in June of 1996. Since that time, militarization has increased not only in the state of Chiapas but in most Mexican states, especially where there are Indigenous populations.

In the interest of preserving the original eyewitness accounts, no stylistic changes have been made in this translation. We have included a short glossary of terms for a better understanding of this document in the appendix. We hope this book will not only increase awareness about the oppression of Indigenous people in Chiapas but will compel us to act in a collective effort with those who are trying to stop the destruction of the "poorest of the poor."

*June, 1997*



---

# Introduction

## Are there conditions to continue the dialogue in San Andrés?

Today, millions of Mexicans are struggling for a political system that is based more on government action than on government discourse; one which is based on creative options to solve the major problems which have recently overwhelmed the nation. We are struggling to design an economic policy which includes all Mexicans in the productive process. We need accurate and timely information about all events in our country. We must achieve a State reform which establishes, among other things, conditions for electoral equality and justice; a judicial system which puts an end to the impunity enjoyed by those who have exploited our nation.

Nonetheless, we must painfully admit, in the case of Chiapas, that the old way of doing politics takes on a level of perversity that approaches a dirty war. The basic political plan designed by Gustavo Iruegas to solve the conflict in Chiapas, is based on the old tradition of Mexican torturers using the *good cop - bad cop* strategy to force victims into confessing. Almost anything can be discussed at the negotiating table, but what dominates is not a policy of dialogue but one of police and military criteria. They are trying to crush and reduce the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) so that they will yield at the negotiating table. The heart of the problem is that this policy, in its actions, actually denies the fundamental causes which originally motivated the Zapatista uprising.

The principal role of the *good cop*, in the case of Chiapas, has been played by the governmental

negotiating commission, headed by Marco Antonio Bernal. As the dates for the dialogue approach, a good part of the mass media talk about the generosity of the government in trying to solve the problem...of the offers which it is making...of the thousands of millions of pesos which it has spent in Chiapas...in the initiation of public works... Yet, at the same time, the Federal Army, agents from the Attorney General's Office and the *guardias blancas* (private paramilitary groups) are taking turns "on stage" before each session of dialogue, unleashing old and new demons: violent evictions of peasants from properties; assassinations at the hands of *guardias blancas* who act with impunity; low-level flights; army incursions into civilian communal lands; imprisonment and/or sentencing of alleged Zapatistas, in contradiction of the Law on Agreement and Pacification. There are many other forms of exercising the role of the *bad cop*.

With this model of political intervention, the dialogues advance at a very slow pace, and the Mexican government is playing with the lives of the people, without negotiating seriously. Civil society is witness to the fact that its government is not seeking true alternatives, which is shown in its actions. Rather, the government reverts to the old "customer" and corporative approach, and to the use of force.

In response to this political climate plagued with violence, civil society of Chiapas, through the Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ), urgently summoned a diverse and broadbased group of citizens from all sectors and political parties to see if conditions exist for the continuation of the dialogue scheduled for June 5, 1996.

---

Some 40 persons from different parts of the country, from diverse sectors, from different economic conditions and political positions, responded to the call. They went to Chiapas to understand and testify about the conditions which exist in Chiapas for the continuation of the dialogue. Grouped into various observation teams, we traveled several routes to visit the most significant indigenous communities in Chiapas, as well as places where the national press had recently reported conflicts. The text and graphic material which we present here constitute our testimony

regarding the observations which we carried out on our diverse journeys on June 1 through 3, 1996.

We have also included reports regarding the violent situation which prevails in the northern part of the state. These reports were written by national observers on June 28 and 29. These observers were invited by the Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations "Todos los Derechos para Todos" ("All Rights for All"), in coordination with the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center.



## **Chapter I**

# **Civilian Observations Regarding the Effects of Militarization**

---

# Statement from the Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ)

## Considering:

- That the present situation for beginning the dialogue again is uncertain and that this endangers the peace process.
- That the key point is not the liberation of Javier Elorriaga and Sebastian Entzin, but the accusation and the judgement by the executive and judicial powers, respectively, that the EZLN is a terrorist group with whom the government is negotiating.
- That the problem of the dialogue is not centered so much on the date of June 5, as on the question of safe conditions for the talks, regardless of the date they start again.
- That the physical, military and political conditions are determined by the growing ungovernability of the state. They are also determined by a greater and more intimidating military presence, maintained under the pretense of fighting narcotrafficking in various strategic points throughout the state: the jungle, the highlands and the northern zone of Chiapas.
- That the militarization, paramilitarization, *guardias blancas* and other armed groups in the state could detonate an even larger conflict in different parts of Chiapas, undermining the possibilities for progress in the peace process.
- That civil society is paying the price for this situation with an increasingly displaced population in the northern region of the state. There is uncertainty insofar as to the freedom of transit.

## Given this situation, CONPAZ proposes the following to organized civil society:

- That civil society publicly declare that the conditions for dialogue cannot be guaranteed due to the violence and militarization of the state, and that the international community in solidarity with Chiapas make similar statements.
- The creation of a broad-based delegation of intellectuals and public figures from civil society, accompanied by the COCOPA (the Commission for Agreement and Pacification), the CONAI (the National Mediation Commission) and representatives from civil organizations, to visit regions of Chiapas to observe and formulate proposals leading to the establishment of the minimal conditions necessary for dialogue.
- That this delegation with as many as 100 people will meet on May 31, 1996, in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas. On June 1, the members will participate in a briefing and organizational meeting. On June 2, the groups will split up and travel to different points in Chiapas for observation, coordinating by CONPAZ and other sister organizations. On June 3, the delegation will prepare a diagnosis/analysis and a public statement regarding the militarization and ungovernability of the state.





Question without answer: "Mr. Zedillo: Why do your soldiers want to kill us?"



"We don't want a peace imposed with arms by the government. No to a humiliating peace".



---

# Towards Conditions for Dialogue in Chiapas

- It is apparent that the situation for dialogue is going through difficult times, since we believe that the political conditions for dialogue between the EZLN and the federal government do not exist at the moment. Much has been said about the militarization and ungovernability in Chiapas. CONPAZ invites representatives of civil society, humanitarian organizations, political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, churches, universities, and intellectuals and artists from different Mexican states to visit Chiapas to verify the conditions of social tension that exist in the so-called "conflict zone" and to go on record with their observations.
- CONPAZ invites all members of the delegations to a meeting in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas on May 31, 1996 to reach an agreement regarding the essential points of the observation, to form the groups and to send the delegations to the following locations: Oventic, La Realidad, Roberto Barrios, San Quintín, Cañada Patihuitz, Chilón, Tila, and Sabanilla among others.
- Please confirm your participation by Thursday, May 30, at the latest, by calling one of the following telephone numbers: (967) 8 69 77, 8 38 68 and/or 8 57 63. This list of invited guests attempts to be a diverse one. This invitation does not imply siding with any of the parties involved in the conflict nor with other invited participants. Rather, it is a means of engaging in the peace process - to witness and verify the political and physical conditions in Chiapas, so that the dialogue can take place. Each person will pay their own expenses.

Those who follow are not all of us. We propose the following persons:

Amalia Solórzano (widow of Cárdenas), Mario López Barrio (Provincial of the Society of Jesus), Alejandra Moreno Toscano, Bernardo Bátiz, Luis Colosio Fernández, Adolfo Gilly, Rafael Segovia, Amado Avendaño, Octavio Paz, Francisco Ornelas, José Sarukhán, Miguel Concha Malo, Alfredo Gutiérrez González, Raúl Padilla, Andrés Peñaloza, Sergio Zermeno, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Arnaldo Córdoba, Arturo Lona Reyes (bishop), María Rojo (actress), Juan Gabriel (composer), Héctor Bonilla (actor), Federico A. del Toro, Guillermo Briseño (musician), Luis de Tavira, Ana Colchero, Jesusa Rodríguez, Laura Esquivel (writer), Carlos Payán, Julio Scherer, Sergio Obeso (bishop), Carlos Albert, Ricardo Rocha, Cristina Pacheco, Javier Solórzano, Rodolfo García del Pino, Carlos Ramírez, Miguel Angel Granados Chapa, Naranjo, Magú, Rafael Barajas (El Fisgón, *La Jornada*), Leticia Hernández Montoya, Alvaro Zepeda Neri, Helguera, Eduardo del Río, Eduardo Montes, Carlos David Velazco (Mono de Papel), Carlos Slim, Fernando Ortiz Arana, Felipe Arizmendi (bishop), Humberto Roque Villanueva, Sergio García Ramírez, Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar, Norma Paulina Montaña (National Human Rights Commission, Highlands and Jungle), Jazmín Lima Adams (State Human Rights Commission, Chiapas), Guillermo Soberón, Manuel V. Suárez, Félix Gallardo, Felipe Aguirre F. (bishop), Raúl Vera (coadjutor bishop), Miguel León Portilla, Beatriz Paredes, Manuel Ballesteros (Casa del Pueblo, Juchitán, Oaxaca), Amalia García, Héctor Sánchez, Jesús Ortega, Carlos Castillo Peraza, Andrés López Obrador, Heberto Castillo, Elba E. Gordillo, María de los Angeles Moreno, Patricia Ruiz Anchondo, Marco Rascón, Super Barrio (candidate for the U.S. presidential elections), Auldarico Hernández, Martín Longoria, Santiago Oñate L., Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Arnoldo Martínez Verdugo, Ricardo Valero, Samuel del Villar, Mario Saucedo, Efrén Capiz, Enrique González



Torres, Manuel Canto, José Álvarez Icaza, Elio Villaseñor, Cecilia Loría, Bertha Luján, Carlos Ortega, Silvia Schmelkers, Alejandro Guerrero, David Fernández, Patricia Nava, José L. Pérez Canchola, Sergio Aguayo, Teresa Jardí, Patricia Moysen, Eduardo Torres (CAMPO, Oaxaca), Flora Guerrero, Luisa Paré, Marcela Lagarde, Víctor Quintana, Rocío Culebro, María Meyer, Patricia Jiménez, Rafael Reygadas, Gabriela Sánchez, Ma. Luisa Herrasti, Daniel Ponce, Mario Monroy, Adela Bonilla, Martha Figueroa, Miguel A. de los Santos, Ricardo Barco, José Herrera Marcos, Salvador García, Oralia Cárdenas, Luz Rosales, Manuel Camacho, Lorenzo Meyer, Demetrio Sodi, Carlos Montemayor, Néstor de Buén, Emilio Krieger, José Soberanis, Luis Javier Garrido, Elena Poniatowska, Guadalupe Loaeza, José Emilio Pacheco, Enrique G. Pedrero, Julieta Campos, Enrique Krauze, Federico Reyes Heróles, José Francisco Paoli Bolio, Jorge Castañeda, Jorge Alcocer, Héctor Aguilar Camín, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Fernando del Paso, Vicente Leñero, Carlos Monsivais, Carlos Fuentes, Rosario Ibarra, José Luis Calva, Pedro René Bodegas, Pablo González Enríquez.

*In Search of a Just and Dignified Peace for All*  
CONPAZ



"Zedillo, we, the Indigenous people, are not terrorists nor delinquents. We are honorable fighters of our country. Long live the EZLN."

---

# Results of the Observations by Members of Civil Society on June 1 and 2, 1996, in the so-called Conflict Zone in the State of Chiapas<sup>1</sup>

On Tuesday, May 27, 1996, the Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ) summoned a diverse group of citizens to observe the militarization which exists in the so-called conflict zone in the state of Chiapas.

A group of more than 40 Mexican citizens together with international observers responded to this call. On June 1 and 2, these groups visited the following five regions:

1. Ocosingo-Zapata (San Miguel, La Garrucha, Patihuitz, Rómulo Calzada, El Prado, La Soledad, La Sultana, Bethany, San Quintín and Zapata)
2. Ocosingo-Taniperlas (El Eden, Monte Líbano, Taniperlas)
3. Ocosingo-Chilón-Sabanilla (Cuxulha, Sibaca, Pathuitz, Sabanilla)
4. San Cristóbal-Palenque (Roberto Barrios)
5. Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Cerro Hueco and the displaced from Bachajón)

## Results of the Observations and Testimonies from the Population

### *Actions of the Mexican Federal Army:*

- The Army has set traps in the communities which endanger the lives of the inhabitants. They also use dogs which have already attacked people.
- The presence of prostitution (they bring prostitutes with them, and they also sexually harass the women in the communities, offering money for sex) and alcoholism (they support the sale of alcoholic beverages and there have been cases in which drunken soldiers have fired their weapons during the night).
- Members of military patrols have broken into homes without search warrants. They constantly interrogate the community about leaders of social organizations, the EZLN and the presence of weapons. They perform body searches of the inhabitants to see whether or not they have scars and accuse them of participating in military training. At times, military officials wear civilian clothes and show IDs from the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) and the Ministry of Health and Assistance (SSA) or have pretended to be street vendors or doctors.
- Military training for groups of hired gunmen.
- Military presence frightens the children who then refuse to go to school.
- The Army and the government preferentially support members of the government *Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo* (ARIC Oficial), who also receive assistance in the form of public transportation.
- Illegal takeover of pastureland and *ejidal*

---

<sup>1</sup> Press release issued on June 3, 1996 in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas.



properties for the construction of military bases. Theft of animals and fruits from the land.

- Installation of military roadblocks at intersections where soldiers confiscate machetes from the peasants as they go to work in the corn fields.
- The Army constantly questions the community regarding the presence of outsiders or Zapatistas. They offer money and candy to children to obtain information from them.
- Planting and growing of drugs by the Federal Army (when the peasants notice them, they burn the plants before they can grow). The residents also suspect that the soldiers throw marijuana seeds onto the peasants' land during Army night flights. Members of the military have, on various occasions, penetrated different communities on the pretext of fighting narcotrafficking.
- Day and night patrols in the communities and on roads or pathways through the *ejidos* (at times using civilian vehicles), as well as constant and periodic low-level flights. Permanent incursions in the mountains surrounding the communities.
- Selective harassment of community members and tourists (the taking of photos or videos of military installations is prohibited, even though the military take photos and videos of the visitors), demanding personal data and taking down the license plate numbers of all persons on roads to the *ejidos*.
- Exploiting land and natural resources, principally timber, without the consent of the community.
- Trafficking in wild animals either by capturing animals in the jungle or by paying the local residents for the capture of birds and monkeys.
- Pollution of rivers and lakes with garbage; as in the case of the Jataté river and Lake Miramar.

### Consequences of Military Actions:

- Community members are not able to freely leave the villages to work in the fields; this has led to a reduction of food supplies for the community.

- An increase in alcoholism and prostitution in the communities. Hence, the Indigenous women remain more secluded for fear of being harassed or raped by members of the Army.
- Community members have indicated that military presence has negatively impacted their mental health, causing depression, an increase in family and community violence, increased psychosomatic illness and the consumption of alcohol.
- Negative impact on the environment.
- An increase in social polarization within indigenous communities as mistrust and uncertainty grow, negatively affecting indigenous social and cultural life.
- The military spending is much higher than the social spending in the zone. The comfort level of the soldiers contrasts greatly with the scarce resources available to the local civil society. The military exploits the natural resources (particular timber) on the communal lands, with impunity and without the consent of the communities, making it difficult for the residents to access and use these resources.
- The communities do not receive the services which the military is supposed to provide.
- The military presence blocks the mobility and possibility of communication among the different groups of civilians that live in the area.
- The placement of military personnel and their equipment in communal areas represents a clear position of war since these are located strategically around the populated areas. It is obvious that the military guards, in their towers and trenches located outside the military barracks, are carrying out surveillance activities of the communities. The soldiers constantly move from their army barracks to the communities.
- The military occupation in the area leads to the belief that civil society is unable to make decisions about the use and political management of its land.
- Government resources destined to develop the communities are assigned to groups which side with the Government. It is clear that this is done

---

to provoke confrontations among social groups in the community which will lead to a permanent state of conflict among such groups. The composition of the local power groups has not changed at all. This makes any political solution impossible.

- The soldiers are generating an artificial market in the communities through the consumption of certain products (soda, tortillas, etc) and by asking women to wash their clothes. This artificial market is subject to the military presence and is not a source of stable nor permanent employment and investment. Moreover, it is a means of building relationships and obtaining information from the community.

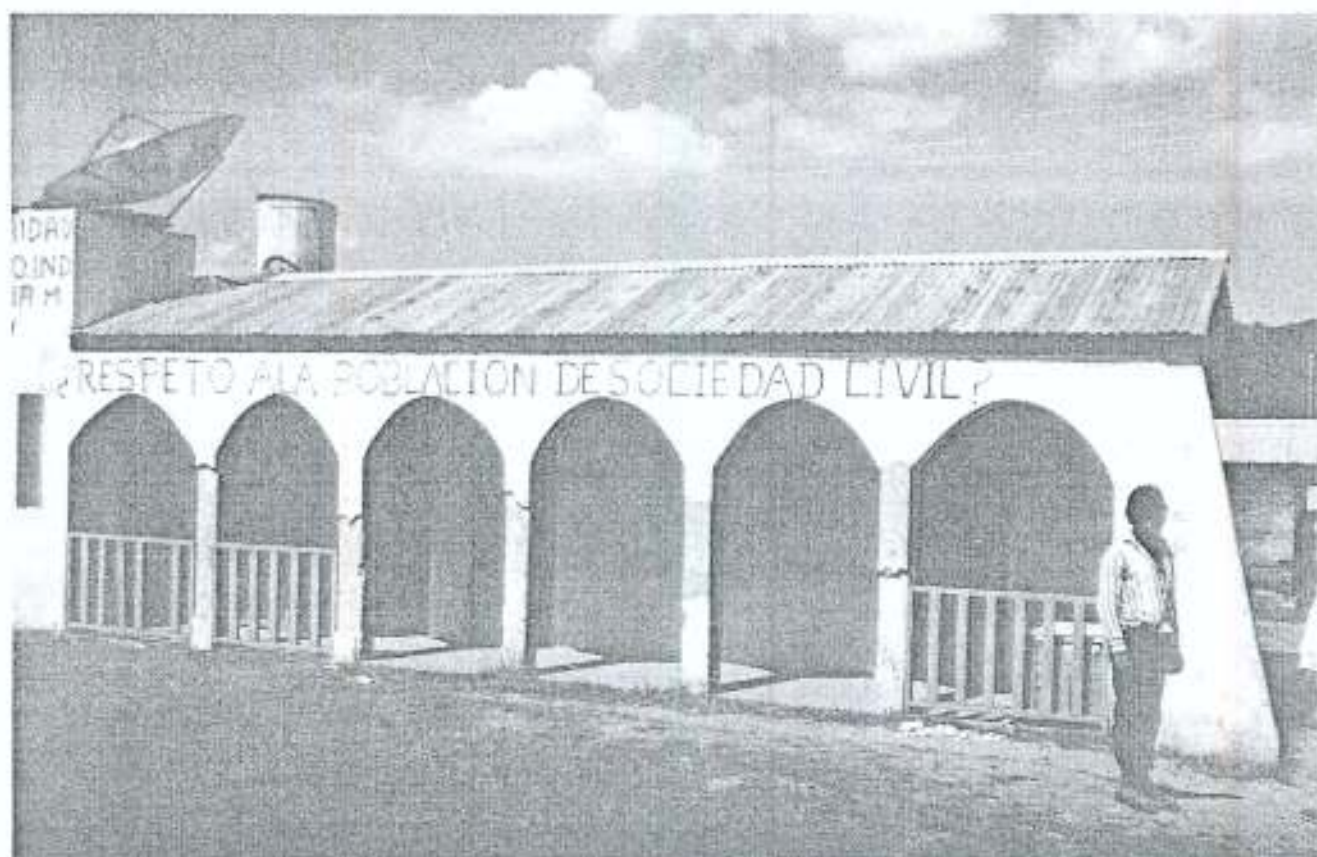
## **Demands**

- \* The immediate withdrawal of the Mexican Army from the communities.
- \* The immediate disbanding and disarmament of *guardias blancas* and paramilitary groups such as the *Chinchulines* and *Paz y Justicia* ("Peace and Justice").
- \* That the different solutions for reconciliation come from each of the communities affected by the conflict.
- \* That humanitarian aid and Government resources destined for the communities reach all people, through civilian and not military means.

*Sincerely,*

*The civilian participants observing the situation of militarization in the state of Chiapas, as summoned by CONPAZ*





In Taniperlas. Respect for civil society.



"Don't put dogs in with us. We are not animals. We are Christians."



---

# Report from the Group of Civilian Observers on the Ocosingo-Taniperlas Route

**Date of Observation:** June 1, 1996

**Route:** "El Edén" Ranch, Monte Líbano, Taniperlas

## Report

On June 1, the observers traveled to the Aguazul canyon in the municipality of Ocosingo, where a strong military presence was noted.

The first Army barracks observed, located at "El Edén" ranch is located in a populated area and the displaced citizens have not, to date been able to return. Calculations put the number of military personnel at 500. The group encountered five soldiers transporting logs for the construction of houses, suggesting a prolonged military stay.

The next army barracks observed was the one located at Monte Líbano, a community populated by approximately 200 Tzeltal families. The military infrastructure has the capacity to lodge about 100 soldiers. Equipment is varied and in large supply, with tanks, amphibious cars (approximately 30), jeeps and troop transport trucks (about 20 units of each type). According to a captain from Taniperlas, this is the military command for the region.

The third army barracks observed was in Taniperlas, with a population of some 500 inhabitants. The camp is located alongside the village's airport runway. In the past week, the soldiers have occupied the summits of hills surrounding the community. Their numbers are estimated at about 500.

The next camp, known as Perla de Acapulco, has approximately the same number of military personnel as the former, some 500. Their visible

equipment consists of various amphibious vehicles, as well as tanks. Military occupation of this village dates from February 9, 1995. Constant tank and military brigade movements have been recorded.

## Results of the Observation

- Military spending is disproportionate in relation to social spending in the area. The comfort in which the soldiers live is in sharp contrast to the scarce resources available to local civilians. In addition, the military exploits the land and natural resources, particularly timberyielding resources, with impunity and without community consent. They also impede civilian access to and use of these same resources. Moreover, the military fails to provide services to the communities.
- Military presence blocks the movement and the possibilities for communication among the different groups of civilians that live in the zone.
- The stationing of military personnel and equipment in communal areas clearly represents a war situation. Each of these areas is strategically located near civilian populations. It is obvious to observers that the military guards, located in towers and trenches outside the army barracks, are carrying out surveillance of the communities. The soldiers also continually carry out troop movements in their army barracks near the communities.
- The military occupation in the zone leads to the belief that civilian society is unable to make decisions regarding the use and political management of its territory.



- The public resources destined for community development are preferentially assigned to those groups siding with the government. This is clearly done with the intent to incite confrontations among the social groups of the community and to establish a state of permanent conflict between them.
- The composition of the local power groups ("cazicagos" - leadership associated with excessive influence in the politics and administration of a community, usually carried out in a despotic, tyrannical way) has not changed at all. This makes any political solution impossible.
- The soldiers are generating an artificial market in the communities through their consumption of certain products (soda, tortillas, etc.) and by asking women to wash their clothes. This market is subject to the presence of the army and does not signify a source of permanent nor stable employment or investment. Moreover, this contact is used to their advantage to become familiar with and obtain information from the community.



Detention of observers by the Army in La Trinitaria.



---

# Report from the Group of Civilian Observers on the San Cristóbal-Oventic-San Andrés Route

**Date of Observation:** June 1, 1996

## Description of the Trip

In traveling the stretch between Chamula and Oventic, we were struck by the fact that there were men using chemical fertilizers on their corn fields in the areas which were clearly identified and known as "PRI" zones (communities which belong to the ruling political party). Along the side of their land there were at least two sacks of chemical fertilizer. In non-PRI zones, only the women and children were working but they had no chemical fertilizers.

Near Oventic, we observed a military camp divided into three sections, situated about four kilometers from the "Aguascalientes" of this region. (Oventic is one of five specific EZLN communities known as "Aguascalientes"). This camp was located on the high slope of a mountain which overlooks this area. The approximate number of soldiers in the three sections is 400. We observed more than 50 vehicles with more than a dozen tanks aimed at various locations within the zone.

Along the highway, five military groups were training outside their camp. As we moved toward the second section, the soldiers, submachine guns in hand, asked us to stop our automobile and have our driver identify himself. Before returning our identification, they took our pictures, saying at the same time, that we could not take their pictures.

In the course of the trip between Oventic and the small villages beyond, we observed that the majority of the people were women and children dedicated to household chores and work in the fields.

From San Andrés to Oventic, we observed many signs prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol and the growing of drugs. There were other signs demanding corn and peace, as well as the army's withdrawal from their communities.

In San Andrés, a military camp is stationed on the hilly parts of the community where the school buildings are located. Thus, the community cannot use the school.

As we were returning to San Cristóbal, we encountered a military convoy consisting of three troop transport trucks, preceded by two new trucks use by the Judicial Police and agents of the Attorney General's Office (PGR).

## Comments from the Delegation Relating to the Conditions for Dialogue and Peace

In the entire area, poverty conditions contrast with military and police spending:

- 1996 model trucks; construction of a highway which ends at the foot of the military camp; abundant provisions for the soldiers and high technology arms.
- Military presence is invading community spaces, altering the daily life styles and violating the letter and spirit of the Law for Agreement and Pacification.
- Furthermore, the use of agrochemical fertilizers systematically impoverishes the land and contradicts the spirit of the agreements of San



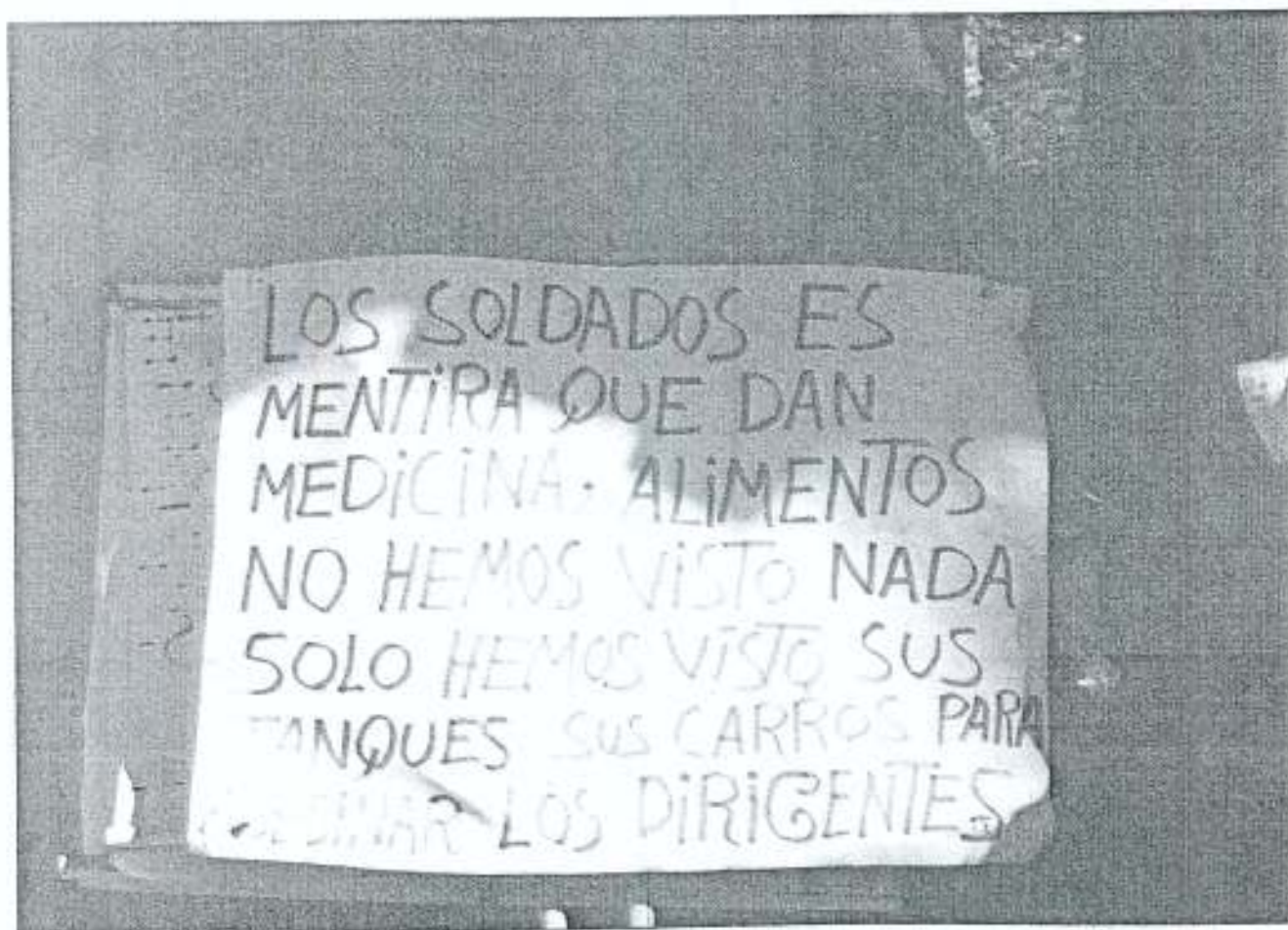
Andrés which are clearly oriented towards supporting production methods which conserve and improve ecosystems.

- Throughout the past few weeks, there has been a strong publicity campaign urging the federal and state governments to fulfill their part of the San Andrés dialogue accords. Our appraisal is that the selective distribution of fertilizers and corn does not constitute the fulfillment of the accords, but rather forms part of the discriminatory practices which favor groups identified as supporting the official political party (PRI). This practice harms large sections of civil society.
- Communities are being divided and community

values are undermined. There is not an atmosphere which is conducive to peace and decreases tensions.

For all of the above reasons, we believe that there must be a change in the conception of dialogue on the part of the Government. Government discourse upholds the need for dialogue and peace, but in practice, it promotes military harassment and discrimination in the distribution of resources to the people.

We believe that the government intends to stop the dialogue and that it has demonstrated this through its practices and not its stated intentions. This must change.



The Army must leave our communities: "It is a lie that the soldiers provide medicine and food. We have seen nothing of this. We have only seen their tanks and their cars made for assassinating leaders."



---

# Report on the Visit to the Cerro Hueco Prison and the Municipal Auditorium in Tuxtla Gutiérrez <sup>2</sup>

**Date of Observation:** June 1, 1996

*The complete version of our interview with Jorge Javier Elorriaga Berdegúe will be transcribed onto the Internet and sent out to a list of individuals and organizations upon our return to the U.S. Here we will mention only those points which seem to be the most relevant and relate to the current state of the conflict, not only in Chiapas but throughout the entire country.*

Javier Elorriaga stressed the importance of a fair legal resolution of his case and the case of Sebastián Entzin Gómez. Their freedom should be granted on the basis of a total lack of evidence against them. This would then allow the same legal process to be used with the other "presumed Zapatistas" who remain in prison.

Elorriaga also insisted that we interview Indigenous political prisoners to record the terrible arbitrariness with which they are treated. The indigenous people must run their own judicial system according to their practices and customs within the guidelines of the autonomous indigenous areas. This would be the only way to end the tremendous abuses and total lack of justice suffered by indigenous people under the state (and national) judicial systems since time immemorial.

Elorriaga stated the following with regards to the 24 members of the paramilitary group, the Chinchulines, involved in the assassinations and burning of houses around May 5 of this year in Bachajón, Chiapas:

*"(...) They kill for practically nothing (...) their arrest must be the first of many steps. If nothing more is done, these arrests will mean nothing in themselves since there are another 80 or more (...). [Someone from the group adds that you won't find anyone in Cerro Hueco who arms or finances the Chinchulines]. As a start, it is fine as a beginning of beginnings; if this is the final result though, it won't mean anything; these fellows will take all the rap. I would recommend that you to speak with the peasant prisoners of Chiapas. Right now, there are several with whom you can speak. There must be, given the land problems, more or less about 70. As for the litigation I have been put through, this happens to them every day. There have been peasants who were grabbed by the guardias blancas in their own corn fields and handed over to the prisons, accused by a rancher. A year goes by and the rancher never appears; and later they are given a 12 year prison sentence. This is how it is with all prisoners in Chiapas. So it is very important to take advantage of the moment and state that you've seen what has happened with Elorriaga and Entzin and that this happens to all Indigenous peasants. That's why it is very important that they be allowed to have their own instruments of justice; that there be government attorneys and public defenders who are indigenous people. That's easy... We must work for this change... As members of human rights organizations, you can do this.*

*In a few words, it is disgusting what they do to them. People who arrive here, whose only crime has been fighting for land and sometimes not even that... At times, "law and order" forces are passing*

---

<sup>2</sup> This delegation was also made up of persons from the following organizations: DeKalb, Area Interfaith Network for Peace and Justice with Dignity in Chiapas, Global Exchange and the International Programs of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.



*by and they need some excuse to act on. And so they grab the male member of a family and the women and children are left behind.... There have been cases of minors arrested for possession of 15 grams of marijuana.... They are beaten and later given 12 year prison sentences...12 years in prison for 15 grams of marijuana! (...) And so yes, I am asking that you work on the cases of the imprisoned peasants, of the Indigenous prisoners (...).*"

Javier Elorriaga promised to send us the text of various interviews he has conducted with peasant and Indigenous political prisoners along with information on their cases over the Internet. We were not able to interview Sebastian Entzin, but were able to interview three individuals condemned to several years in prison over a land ownership dispute. These individuals live in **non-Zapatista conflict zones**, but conflict zones just the same.

One of them is from the municipality of San Cristóbal, La Hormiga neighborhood: Antonio Hernández Gómez, Chamula leader, expelled from San Juan Chamula in 1982 and imprisoned for land invasion. His new community named him as the "negotiator" for invaded properties vis a vis state and federal authorities. He was incarcerated on April 17, 1996 when he was testifying before a judge. There still has been no sentence. He spoke about his case. It is one of many centered on the alleged invasion of land, and he stressed that the land problems should not be solved by the jailing of Indigenous leaders. He explained that since 1994, land titles were under negotiations and that he had a document from Carlos Salinas de Gortari, another from Ernesto Zedillo, and still others from the governors of Chiapas, López Moreno, Elmar Selzer, and the present interim governor, Luis Ferro. Ferro sent him to jail.

Antonio Hernández Gómez stated that he was elected Representative (alternate) of Chiapas. He is accused of kidnaping, robbery, rape, the illegal bearing of arms and deprivation of freedom. According to Antonio, all of these charges are fabricated and the real reason for his imprisonment is political. He indicated that, because the authorities will not fairly resolve this problem, all indigenous prisoners will have to fight for justice through their organizations

such as ADEPECH (the People's Democratic Assembly of Chiapas), the PRD (the Party of Democratic Revolution), and the united organizations of the state of Chiapas. Even though all the Indigenous prisoners in Cerro Hueco are here, according to Antonio, for questions relating to land issues, the majority are charged with other crimes including: cattle rustling, theft, etc.... Antonio is a member of SCOPNUR, an organization aimed at improving conditions for the peasants and Indigenous people.

Another person interviewed was Rafael López Santís, an indigenous Tojolabal from the Rafael Ramírez neighborhood, in the municipality of Las Margaritas. He is accused of crimes against health. He was denounced by two Tojolabal peasants, both members of the PRI. The two accusers were arrested for planting marijuana and were promised freedom in exchange for informing on López Santís on the false charge of cultivating marijuana. The accusers were transferred to Prison 2, but have not been released. Rafael López Santís and his accusers have had previous disputes over land boundaries. After his arrival to Cerro Hueco on July 1, 1995, there was a comparison of the testimonies of Rafael and the people who denounced him. They denied that López Santís was involved in the cultivation of drugs. Nonetheless, Rafael was detained and forced to serve a sentence of 11 years based on other fabricated charges. López Santís appealed his sentence and it was reduced by three years. Still, he must serve eight years for crimes which he did not commit. He is now awaiting the results of a proposed pardon. His only crime appears to be belonging to the Party of the Democratic Revolution. He has not seen his wife and young children for eight months because the cost of travel from his community to Tuxtla Gutiérrez is very high. One must also add the cost of staying overnight in Tuxtla in order to be able to see him during visiting hours which end at 3:00 pm.

Our third interview was with Alejandro Flores who comes from Chilón and was a victim of the *Chinchulines*. Two from this group, Jose Manuel Maldonado Hernández and Jose Hernández Gómez, killed one of Flores' colleagues prior to the last elections. Flores and his brother were taken by force by the *Chinchulines* for criticizing the candidate of the PRI. Under torture and threats, they were forced



to sign a declaration stating that they were carrying arms of different calibers and that they had Zapatista clothing and ski masks in San Jerónimo Bachajón.

Alejandro was beaten and tortured by a few of the *Chinchulines* who are now in Cerro Hueco accused of homicide and arson. Nonetheless, he has been sentenced to five years in prison for assault. He has registered three appeals and each time, his five year sentence was upheld. He is currently awaiting the results of his final appeal.

Alejandro spoke about the same type of accusations against the *Chinchulines* as we heard from the refugees of the latest skirmish in Bachajón which took place on May 5 of this year. We visited these individuals in the municipal stadium of Tuxtla Gutiérrez where we were told that the *Chinchulines* are a paramilitary group supported by the PRI and various ranchers in the area (armed and subsidized by them) which explains their impunity. None of the refugees believe that the *Chinchulines* imprisoned in Cerro Hueco will be sentenced for their crimes.

After visiting the prisoners at Cerro Hueco, we interviewed the refugees from Bachajón as mentioned above. The municipal stadium in Tuxtla Gutiérrez is guarded by both a policeman and a soldier. The majority of the men there fear that they will be arrested, like the arrests made on May 30, 1996 when state Judicial Police and agents from both Public Security and Immigration detained various people under the pretext that they did not have their identification documents in order. These people are now in Cerro Hueco. The irony of the case is that the person accusing Arbey Trujillo Méndez and Jesús Miguel Gómez of being "indocumentados" ("without proper identification"), was a *Chinchulin*, Manuel Gómez Sanchez.

There is a video tape of the declarations of three of the Mestizo and Tzeltal refugees that were

gathered in the municipal stadium on June 1, 1996. Malena Gutiérrez Gonzalez, mother of three children and an incredibly courageous woman, gave us a detailed account of the events of May 5, in Bachajón. She told us about the activities of the *Chinchulines* who stole her belongings before burning her house. Then she related how she fled on foot from the village to Cintá and about her arrival in Tuxtla Gutiérrez where she received no assistance from the government. She has been aided by people from the village and her family who send *tostadas* and *pozol* (fried tortillas and a corn beverage) all the way from Bachajón. Since there is no potable water, they must buy drinking water. There was also a raid on May 31 and two of her companions may be detained, now accused of homicide and injury with a 22,000 peso-per-person bail.

She mentioned several names of persons who have aided and armed the *Chinchulines*. She emphasized that among them are the following: government Representative, Rafael Ceballos Cancín; cattle rancher, Carlos Cañas Parada and the former president of Bachajón, Abigael Morales, as well as his son Israel Morales, who delivered arms last May 5 to *Chinchulin* members Abelardo Pascasio and Antonio Domínguez Domínguez.

Malena Gutiérrez González as well as another young refugee in the stadium, told us that they have been denied the right to an audience and that their representatives have only been received by employees of the Secretary of Government. To date no one has paid the least bit of attention to them. Rather, the Government has tried to minimize their case and conceal it. Prior to President Zedillo's visit to Chiapas, the state Government tried by every means to coopt the people so that they would leave the stadium and return to their village or, at the very least, agree to be transferred to a less conspicuous site in Chiapa de Corzo.





Military camp in La Soledad.



Demanding the release of Elorriaga and Entzin.

---

# Report from the Group of Civilian Observers Regarding Cerro Hueco Prison and the Displaced from Bachajón in Tuxtla Gutiérrez

*Date of Observation:* June 1, 1996

## Cerro Hueco Prison

At the Cerro Hueco prison we interviewed Javier Elorriaga, Rafael López Santis (Indigenous Tojolabal imprisoned for crimes against health), Alejandro Flores (Indigenous Tzeltal imprisoned for assault) and Antonio Terán (Indigenous Tzotzil imprisoned for fraud).

It is absurd to think that while the Executive Power (the Secretary of State) is signing peace accords in San Andrés, another branch of the same government, (the Attorney General's Office) is asking for 40 years of prison for those they consider to be members of the EZLN and terrorists.

The sentencing of alleged EZLN members is not the only issue influencing the continuation of the dialogues. The militarization of the state, the ambiguity of the government's speeches and the actions of paramilitary groups in Chiapas are also affecting the talks. All of these factors show the lack of conditions for the dialogue.

In Cerro Hueco, there are prisoners who were detained while struggling for their demands (for land, for a resolution to electoral conflicts, etc.) There were also political prisoners. All of them are victims of irregularities in the judicial process.

The Indigenous prisoners mentioned that they were detained arbitrarily, beaten and tortured; some were detained by civilians (or paramilitary groups) and later handed over to the authorities. They all belong either to social organizations or to an opposition political party.

## The Displaced of Bachajón

Among the displaced of Bachajón, we found both pregnant and sick women. The authorities have not followed through on their offer to build homes for the displaced. These people are constantly threatened with removal and relocation away from the municipal auditorium. Recently, the judicial police came and took away two individuals, accused of being responsible for the loss of items from a hardware store owned by a member of the *Chinchulines* (losses were estimated at a cost of 22,000 pesos).

## Testimony from América Gutiérrez González

"They detained my husband the day before yesterday. They came here to get him. Here! They did not show any arrest warrant. State police chiefs came and, in a very aggressive manner, began pushing the children around, shoving us and asking us, "Where is your identification?" My clothes tell the whole story. My husband was there and they had brought one of the *Chinchulines* who pointed my husband out so that he would be detained. And later, the police got together and without any arrest warrant, grabbed another man whom they accused of homicide. Why... why so much injustice on behalf of the Government? Why are they covering up for the *Chinchulines*? Why do you suppose that they are being protected? ...The *Chinchulines* are acting in a very bad way in our village. All we could do was complain when the *Chinchulines* were taking us, we had to close [inaudible] because they came with their rifles -- lots of arms. Look, they have done a lot, an awful lot. They have left people blind. They have left people beaten, really, a lot of people.



It's just that many people, out of fear, have not spoken out. Do you know how much they wanted me to pay for my husband's bond? 22,500 [pesos]. Where do they think I'm going to get the money to be able to pay if they've left me with nothing. [Crying]

We have denounced this before: the *Chinchulines* have been making death threats. They (the authorities) never paid attention to us. All of this happened because they never paid any attention to us.



Military interrogation of observers in La Trinitaria.



# The Situation in the Northern Zone of Chiapas

## Introduction

On June 1 and 2, CONPAZ called on civil society to verify the social and military conditions in Chiapas. In CONPAZ's Bulletin Number 5, we published the synthesis of those reports, written by all of the visitors and originally presented in a press conference on June 3, 1996. Nevertheless, given the special situation which exists at the moment in the northern zone of Chiapas, we present the reports prepared by the delegation which visited the municipalities of Ocosingo (northern zone), Chilón and Sabanilla, as well as those of the delegation which visited the community of Roberto Barrios ("Aguascalientes") in the municipality of Palenque.

These reports are a small sample of the situation in the northern zone. There have also been conflicts over election results, land takeovers, militarization and *guardias blancas*, assassinations, etc., in the municipalities of Tumbalá, Tila, Bochil, Yajalón, Pichucalco and Salto de Agua. In the northern zone, there are two "PRI" paramilitary groups which operate with impunity.

The following events are worth mentioning here: a molotov cocktail bomb went off at the convent in Tila (1/25/1995); *guardias blancas* appeared in Pichucalco leaving one person dead (2/7/1995); three priests were expelled from Yajalón, Sabanilla and Tumbalá (6/22/1995); violent evictions in Sabanilla and Tila (8/17/1995); four houses were burned and four people killed in Nuevo Limar, Tila (9/4/1995); violent clash in Tila (9/5/1995); 600 Chols sought refuge in Salto de Agua which the Federal Army later occupied and the military seized immigration documents from a priest at the border (9/22/1995); 14 kidnappings and forced evictions in Tila (10/1/1995); military occupation of Roberto Barrios, Palenque (1/31/1996); violent events at the Emiliano Zapata ejido (2/14/1996); PRD sympathizers took over the municipal president's office in Sabanilla (3/20/1996); forced evictions from lands by Public Security forces in the municipality of Pichucalco (4/20/1996); aggression by the *Chinchulines* resulting in six dead, 23 houses and six vehicles burned and 150 refugees in Tuxtla Gutiérrez (5/5/1996); assassination of three peasants in Tila by the "PRI" *Paz y Justicia* (*guardias blancas*) (5/24/1996).







Demanding the disarmament of paramilitary groups in Palenque.



"We want the Army out of our communities and our ejidos!"



---

# Report from the Group of Civilian Observers on the Ocosingo-Sabanilla Route

*Date of Observation:* June 1 and 2, 1996

## Municipality of Ocosingo

In the meeting with the delegation in Cuxuljá, there were 55 representatives from 22 communities: 40 men and 15 women. In Sibacjá, there were 65 people from 36 communities. These persons denounced the following:

### Military Aspects

There are two military camps in Cuxuljá with 250 soldiers, 50 members of Public Security forces, 20 from the Federal Judicial Police and a constant patrol by the Federal Highway Police. The army has 15 tanks, 20 trucks, helicopters and four trained dogs. Between Altamirano and Ocosingo there are some 5,000 soldiers patrolling the highways.

There are military camps in the ruins of Toniná, Majosil ranch and Nuevo Jerusalén, with 2,000 soldiers, artillery cars, helicopters and tanks. The army has posted a "Federal Property" sign on land that peasants are legalizing.

### Actions Against the Civilian Population

All of the communities are patrolled during the day and at night. Some drunken soldiers have shot off their guns in the early morning hours. The soldiers often harass the women and offer money in exchange for sex. Women have become pregnant and the community must care for the children. The military has also stationed itself at intersections with dogs which have attacked several people.

The soldiers use civilian cars for patrols. They drive them to the rivers where they bathe themselves, as

well as wash the cars, thus contaminating the drinking water of the communities. Moreover, they harass the women when they go to wash their clothes in the river. The children no longer attended school due to the fear caused by Army presence in the communities.

Soldiers have entered the community of Moisés Gandhi on several different occasions to inspect the houses, without permits and search warrants. They have invaded the communities asking for leaders of organizations and of the EZLN. They are dressed in civilian clothing, with IDs of employees of the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) or from the Ministry of Health (SSA); or as street vendors or doctors providing health services. They try to find the community leaders and to create divisions among the communities.

They have flights every night. People suspect that the Army throws marijuana seeds onto peasant land.

There are some 2,000 soldiers around Ocosingo and they have camps at the town entrances. This is in addition to the camps in Nuevo Jerusalén and on the Maravillas property (owned by Amilcar Estrada). They also have a shooting range. They have installed road blocks at the intersections and they seize the machetes from the peasants as they go to work in the corn fields. On May 28, 1996, they entered the community of Sibacjá on three occasions under the pretext of narco-trafficking investigations. Public Security forces and the Attorney General's Office have installed two checkpoints on the outskirts of Sibacjá, where they harass the residents.

They constantly patrol the communities of Guadalupe La Gloria, San Juanito, Pozo Nazareth, the Cuiljá ranch, Patria Nueva and others. Patria Nueva is land taken over by the peasant organization,



ORCAO. The members of this organization have been threatened with forced eviction and imprisonment at Cerro Hueco if they refuse to leave the site. Last year, the military cleared out the "El Canelo" property, which had also been taken over by ORCAO.

They enter houses asking if there are any weapons. They search people to see if they have any scars and accuse people of being in the ranks of the EZLN. On the other hand, the peasants have detected a series of traps planted by the army and signs which say "Danger: Explosives."

When the town vehicles from Ocosingo dump garbage, agents from the PCR follow them. At the Cuiljá ranch, agents chased two 10-year old children who were bathing in the river, back to their houses.

Cattle rancher, Elías Penagos, and a group of peasants from the government ARIC arrived armed, in Sibacjá, to investigate leaders and threatened to assassinate them.

The residents also denounced that the Federal Army has affected them in the following ways:

### Socio-Economic Aspects

The Federal Army invades the communities, destroying corn and bean crops, felling trees and refusing to allow peasants to leave for work on their lands. This has led to a decrease in crop production, making self-sufficiency very difficult. In addition to all of this, CONASUPO (government subsidized stores) will only sell five kilograms of corn per person. For those who were able to obtain corn, it will last four months and then they must buy the corn through other means. The peasants have had to sell their animals to buy food and other products, mainly sugar and soap.

In the meetings which CONASUPO held in Ocosingo with those in charge of their community stores, it was decided that each store would produce a list of those who are supporters of the PRI. There was an agreement that the merchandise should only be sold to these people and not to those who are considered to be members of independent organizations, the

PRD or the EZLN.

### Social Aspects

The Army has established centers of prostitution and alcoholism. Due to the terror which their presence produces in the communities, the children do not attend school and teachers have withdrawn. In addition, many of the teachers serve as informants for the Federal Army.

There are no health centers nor access to medicine. The soldiers take advantage of this and provide such services to those they wish. There are no family planning programs.

When the peasants present their projects to the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL), they are asked to provide a list of the community leaders, even though they lack basic services. At the same time, supporters of the PRI in the community of Abasolo, dressed as Zapatistas and attacked cars and peasants in this area. The military guards stationed in this region did nothing about it.

The psychological effect of military presence and the military's actions have affected the population quite seriously. Women are especially affected, given their fears of being raped and threatened.

### Municipality of Chilón

In the delegation's meeting with the community of Pathuitz, 60 people participated from seven communities: 20 women and 40 men. In Nazareth, 200 people from seven communities participated: 80 women and 120 men. They denounced the following:

### Military Aspect

There are military and Public Security camps in Bachajón, Temó and Yajalón. The paramilitary group, the *Chinchulines*, operate in Bachajón, although their members can be found in several communities. Since the confrontation on May 5, the community of Tunapaz has served as their main center of operations.



The peasants accuse the following as being responsible for the *Chinchulines*: Manuel Gómez Sánchez, Pablo and Mario Guillén Pérez, Manuel Gómez Hernández, Manuel Guzmán Díaz and Miguel Hernández Pérez. Most of the accused persons belong to either the Pentecostal or Presbyterian church.

Ricardo Tovilla, one of the cattle ranchers in the area, has hired gunmen to assassinate the peasants who took over his land. The teachers in the community of Chuchteel: Carlos López Álvarez, Marcos Pérez Moreno, Roberto López Méndez, Martín Sebastián López Álvarez and Lucio Díaz Molina, invited residents to join an armed group to forcefully evict those who had taken over Tovilla's property. They said that they can count on the support of the Judicial Police and Public Security forces.

In Temó there are 600 soldiers with eight war tanks and most of its inhabitants are *Chinchulines*. The military are constantly patrolling the Temo-Ocosingo-Yajalón and the Contomil-Temó routes. On May 31, they went into Guadalupe Pashila with eight trucks of the Judicial Police and the Public Security forces and about 100 agents look for community leaders whom they accused of planting marijuana. This same day, two workers from the Federal Electricity Commission, accompanied by Public Security forces, threatened to shut-off the electricity transformers in the community of Nazareth since it was a "community in civil resistance," where people have refused to pay their electricity bills.

On May 31, Public Security forces entered the community of Ramosil and stole a television from Pedro Gómez Méndez and the keys to a Nissan vehicle belonging to Daniel Gómez.

They have threatened other communities and harassed people in an attempt to force residents to name the leaders who have occupied lands.

Police and government officials stationed themselves in communities in search of petroleum and bicarbonate and they destroy the peasants crops. The *Chinchulines* have installed road blocks at the crossroads and follow the women when they leave meetings. They demand to see the women's identification and, if the women do not have any

with them, the *Chinchulines* will not allow them to leave. Manuel Hernández Luna and Profesor Pedro Jiménez Gómez have been threatened with death by the *Chinchulines*.

## Socio-Economic Aspect

In this zone, the communities lack services in the following areas: health, electricity, drinking water and CONASUPO stores. At present, the communities only have school classrooms which the people themselves have built.

The peasants who have suffered repression due to the conflict in Bachajón, have been displaced to San Cristóbal, Palenque, Tuxtla and Ocosingo. Their homes have been destroyed and 100,000 tons of coffee have been burned. In the primary school of Nazareth, there is one free text book for every four or five students.

The people cannot organize into independent groups because they will be accused of being Zapatistas. They are pressured into registering themselves as supporters of the PRI. In the community of Sulu-puiz, there was a confrontation between members of ORCAO and the PRI on March 31. The latter passed a decree that prohibited the free organization of peasants. The document was distributed by municipal authorities (COPLADE).

Due to the conflicts, the pre-school, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools are closed in Bachajón.

## Municipality of Sabanilla

In the meeting with the delegation, there were 350 people from 34 communities and they denounced the following:

### Military Aspect

There are two military camps with 600 soldiers on the property of Las Vegas (which belongs to Luis Pérez), as well as 150 members of the Public Security forces. Since the end of last May, there are also 20 members of the Attorney General's office. In the military base there are 5 tanks, 25



trucks and 10 military convoy trucks. Public Security forces has taken over the Health Center and consequently refuse to allow community members to enter the compound.

Former municipal president, Benédicto Jaime Pérez Méndez, together with a few cattle ranchers and Carmen Gómez Ramírez, from the Predio Alegría, are responsible for arming a pro-PRI group in the community of Jesús Carranza. PRI member, Samuel Sánchez Sánchez, the local PRI representative in District VI, is directly responsible for the organization of armed groups (the peasants have a recording of a private conversation which documents this).

PRI supporters in Buenavista have blocked the highway and charge a 500 peso entrance and exit fee for all vehicles. They are armed and they list all of the people's belongings.

Meanwhile, active members of the PRD took over municipal offices in 34 of the 36 communities in Sabanilla on March 22. The region is highly milita-

rized and patrolled by the Army and Public Security agents.

In the middle of May of this year, an armed soldier entered the village's church. Members of Public Security forces had done the same several times before, but in civilian clothing. Since April 1, teachers have not held classes due to the threatening presence of Public Security and Army forces.

The military training of PRI supporters takes place on the property of municipal representative, Carmen Gómez Ramírez, in Campo Alegría. Children are also invited to participate. In this camp, guns are provided to the same groups which, at this moment, are blocking the highway. On the other hand, soldiers are prostituting indigenous girls of 13 and 14 years of age.

In Buenavista, PRI members patrol the community at night, firing off their guns to create terror. The Bancrisa bank provided a loan of 30,000 pesos to the community and this was used to buy weapons for PRI supporters.



Confrontation between peasants, Public Security agents and *guardias blancas* in Chicomuselo.



---

# Report from the Group of Civilian Observers on the Palenque-Roberto Barrios Route

**Date of Observation:** June 2, 1996

During the trip, we encountered a score of military tanks stationed in the CONASUPO warehouse located at the intersection of Temó. Next to these are military camps. It is important to note that the CONASUPO warehouse is full of corn. The delegation wondered and asked: Since when has the Army considered corn to be a matter of national security?

Arriving in Palenque, we found a very large military camp which provides military access to the zone. A few meters from the community of Roberto Barrios, ("Aguascalientes"), there is a military camp with approximately 200 soldiers and a series of trenches equipped with submachine guns and small cannons.

When we arrived at the community, we met with a person from the civilian peace camp. This person told us that the reason why there are only women and children in the community is due to fact that there are rumors that the Federal Army is going to raid the community in search of arms and look for community leaders.

## Community Report

The Federal Army set up camp here on February 2 and to date, has carried out patrols and visits into the community dressed as civilians, asking people about their organization and the leaders of the community.

Lately, strangers have arrived selling vehicles, fruits, earrings and various articles. There has been the sale of 16 caliber rifles for 1200 pesos.

Every person who passes by the military camp is filmed and photographed. The community is very concerned about the training by the military of

personnel from neighboring communities to form *guardias blancas*. Such is the case of Samaritano. In Roberto Barrios, the community's own PRI youth are involved in this. This is done to create divisions in the community and to show who is responsible for the building of the "Aguascalientes." These people have already received a threat stating that they will be eliminated, one by one.

There is a paramilitary training camp at the foot of the large hill of Samaritano, adjoining Roberto Barrios. There have been attacks against women. Here, we highlight the assaults suffered by a 42 year-old widow from the *ejido* of León Brindis, who was beaten and hospitalized in Palenque and by another woman in the *ejido* of Álvaro Obregón. Both were savagely beaten by PRI women.

Last May 16, a bundle was thrown from a helicopter flying at a low altitude. This event served as a pretext for nine Judicial Police officers to enter and search the community, including the church.

At the provisional road block by the military camp, the driver of the community's bus was threatened. The Army threatened to confiscate the vehicle and throw the driver into jail if he continued to transport foreigners to "Aguascalientes." This has hampered the arrival of international observers. As part of the military harassment of women, the soldiers go down to the river every day where the women are washing clothes and bathing.

## Negative Effects of the Military Presence

**Production:** Crops have decreased to one-fourth of what they had been in previous years. This means that the basic needs for food supplies will



not be covered in this agricultural cycle. At the moment, the supply of corn, beans, salt, sugar, etc., is insufficient. Nonetheless, supporters of the PRI receive provisions from the military.

**Social Environment:** There are six pro-PRI families who wash clothes and make the tortillas for the soldiers. There is concern over the constant rumors that the military is going to invade the community.

**Education:** Children regularly attend school from Tuesday to Thursday only.

**Health:** There are complaints of a high rate of throat irritations caused by the contamination of the river since some 200 soldiers wash their clothing and bathe in the river. Only PRI members of the community receive vaccinations during vaccination campaigns. These vaccinations are given by military personnel dressed in white. They receive support from non-governmental organizations and health promoters responsible for the Ministry of Health's clinic.

**Government Services and Programs:** Different governmental agencies offer funds from the PROCAMPO program and other projects but the people never receive such funds. Authorities from the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (SRA) come in search of information regarding the legalization of lands. However, the residents have doubts about the identities of these persons as they are not accredited and also carry small guns such as .38 and .45 caliber pistols.

### Reflections from the Observation Delegation

The delegation considers that there exists a high degree of tension and fear among the residents which does not support the conditions necessary for dialogue. Moreover, the Zapatista delegates are not able to move among the communities for consult agreements regarding the themes of the dialogue.



Training of paramilitary groups in San Cristóbal de Las Casas

---

# Report from the Group of Civilian Observers regarding San Quintín

**Date of Observation:** June 1 and 2, 1996

**Route:** Municipality of Ocosingo: Ocosingo-San Miguel-La Garrucha-Patihuitz- Rómulo Calzada-El Prado-La Soledad-La Sultana-Bethany-San Quintín-Zapata.

Along the 77 km journey, the delegation on the Ocosingo-Zapata route encountered seven military camps located at the following geographical points: Ocosingo, La Garrucha, Patihuitz, Puente Jataté, La Soledad, La Sultana and San Quintín. The community of Zapata stated that there are three battalions, two of which have the following names: *Campamento Fuerza de Tarea* (Task Force Camp) and *Centro de Adiestramiento de Operaciones Especiales* (Special Operations Training Center).

In the community of La Garrucha, personnel from the civilian peace camps assured us that the army presence grows every day and that the people have not left for work in the past few days due to a "red

alert." They also mentioned that it is very difficult for the EZLN delegations to come through the area in order to attend the dialogues in San Andrés.

In the community of Patihuitz, the residents assured us that the presence of the Federal Army has produced fear in the community and thus the people are afraid to leave town to go to work. They also mentioned the problem of prostitutes brought into the communities by the Army as well as the seizure of more than ten hectares of community pastureland.

Members of the community of Zapata, some 500 meters from the military camps of San Quintín, talked about the construction of the Jataté bridge which has never happened. They also mentioned the different traps which the Federal Army has set at various points along the road. They assured us that the soldiers have two mortars aimed directly at the community and that the army plants marijuana and later blames the community.

## Federal Army Activity

- The Army sets traps in the community which endanger peasants' lives.
- Soldiers offer candy and money to children in exchange for information.
- The Federal Army and the government support the members of the governmental ARIC, to whom they also offer assistance through public transportation.
- Invasion of pastureland and *ejido* properties to build military camps.
- Constant questioning of the community regarding the presence of outsiders or Zapatistas.
- Theft of animals and fruit from the land.
- Night patrolling of communities and *ejidal* roads.
- Offering employment in communities by buying tortillas and asking for their clothes to be washed.
- Constant and periodic low-level flights.
- Invasion of peasant land parcels.



- Harassment of tourists.
- Selective harassment of community members.
- They photograph, film, demand personal information and record the license plate numbers of all persons on the *ejido* roads.
- They have permanent incursions in the mountains and by Lake Miramar near San Quintín.
- They cut down trees along the edge of the Jataté River and Lake Miramar.
- They cut trees for burning and construction, without authorization from the residents.
- They promote the trafficking of wild animals, paying local residents for the capture of birds and monkeys.
- They hunt animals.
- They throw trash into the rivers and into Lake Miramar.

### Consequences of the Federal Army's Activity

- People in the communities are not able to leave town to work in the fields and this has led to a diminished food supply in the communities.
- The rate of alcoholism has increased.
- The women cannot leave town to go to the fields.
- Men and women have fallen into prostitution due to the presence of the soldiers.
- The residents have demonstrated that the military presence has had a negative impact on their mental health (depression, an increase in family and community violence, a growing number of people who suffer from psychosomatic illnesses and increased consumption of alcohol).
- Negative impact on the environment.
- Increase in social polarization and mistrust, and lack of safety in the Indigenous communities, which disturbs social and cultural life.
- Increased confinement of Indigenous women due to the fear of being harassed by members of the Federal Army.

## Chapter II

### Citizen Observation Regarding the Violence in the Northern Region of Chiapas



## The Situation in the Northern Region of the State of Chiapas

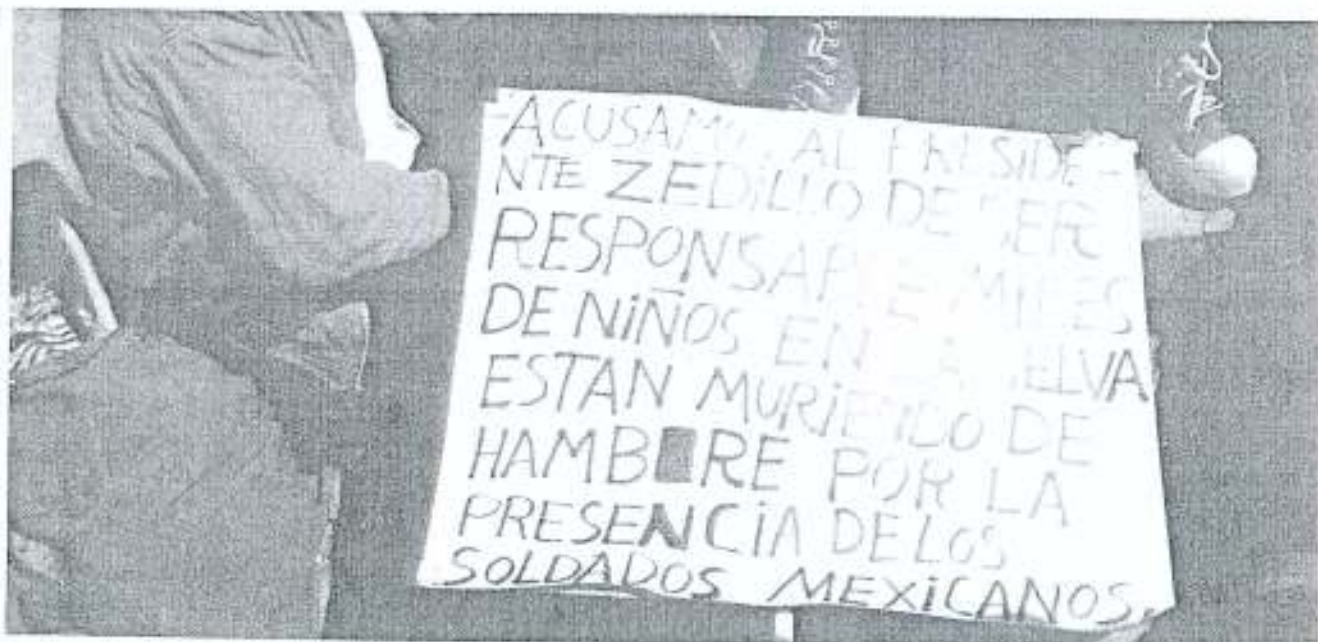
After visiting the northern region of the state, Bishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, stated in a press conference that the growing violence in this area is the beginning of a war which "threatens to be fratricidal; a war of extermination." He added that it is clear that there are "actors who have the specific function of instigating conflicts". He said that principally in Tila, Tumbalá, Sabanilla and Salto de Agua, one can see a "plan where the official party [the PRI] is armed in almost all of the municipalities and has attacked civilian society."

He also explained that it is very possible that the problem "was created intentionally in order to give the idea that it is [the communities] who are fighting one another, and that there are no outsiders provoking these conflicts. The saviour [Federal] Army will then be needed to impose law and order in this territory. And no one should protest, on a national or international level because we have a clear interpretation of the facts as they are."

He insisted that in the municipalities where armed groups such as *Paz y Justicia* and the *Chinchulines* are known to exist, there is "a certain plan to promote confusion and make people believe that peace is not possible because the people are fighting among themselves."

He stated that he had called on the authorities to intervene, but that even though people know who are responsible for the murders of the last few weeks, authorities do not act. Bishop Ruiz indicated that even the state Public Security Police who are in the area, "take no action at all when violent events occur," and, in fact, it appears that "there is a level of endorsement in the different cases."

Due to the situation of violence, more than 400 families have fled to the mountains or have sought refuge in other communities. They lack food, clothing and medicine.



"We hold President Zedillo responsible for the fact that thousands of children are dying of hunger in the jungle due to the presence of the Mexican soldiers."



"We, the Indigenous children, want to live with justice and peace."



Community values: "Soldiers and Drugs. NO! Corn and Peace. YES!"  
La Garrucha, Ocosingo.



---

## The Northern Zone of Chiapas: A Latent Civil War

The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center issued the following statement regarding the general violence in the northern zone of Chiapas: Since last year, this region, which is principally composed of the municipalities of Tila, Sabanilla, Tumbalá and Salto de Agua, has been the scene of confrontations between political and social groups. This has had some very serious consequences: assassinations, threats, arrests, displacements. The state and federal governments have had detailed knowledge of these events.

In March 1995, the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center received the first denouncements recorded in community documents against the group known as *Paz y Justicia*, which is identified with the PRI. According to these documents, this organization had initiated a series of actions against political groups which do not share its ideology.

The collusion between state government authorities and the organization, *Paz y Justicia*, was revealed in a denouncement on June 21, 1995. Two women from the municipality of Tumbalá accused 30 peasants from the municipality together with seven Catholic priests from the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (penal lawsuit 269/95), of organizing a series of illicit activities and of leading an "organization which is said to be the EZLN." There were no grounds for this accusation. The Emiliano Zapata *ejido* and the settlement of La Revancha in the municipality of Tumbalá, are identified as the locations where these activities took place. Based on this denouncement, various arrest warrants were drawn up against peasants active in the Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD). Some were apprehended in June of last year, others in March of this year and all are still being held in Cerro Hueco Prison. On June 22, 1995, three priests who belonged to the San Cristóbal Diocese were expelled

from the country. One of them was among the accused in the penal lawsuit previously mentioned. The official investigations carried out were lacking in both precision and depth and this has been demonstrated to the appropriate public officials. These are the penal proceedings leading up to the present violent situation.

In the beginning of September, 1995, *Paz y Justicia*, reinitiated their attacks in the municipalities of Tila, Tumbalá and Salto de Agua. The large number of displaced PRD supporters from the communities of Usipá, Tz'aquil, Miguel Alemán Valdéz and others, dates from that month. Those who fled, found refuge in villages and *ejidos* where the majority of inhabitants are pro-PRD.

As a result of elections on October 15, Marcos Albino López Torres became the alderman in Tila (he is the leader of *Paz y Justicia* in this area). Since the beginning of the conflict, this public official has been reluctant to work on reconciliation in the area of Tila.

Due to petitioning by residents of the region, the state government considered it appropriate to initiate negotiations for the return of the displaced PRD supporters to their communities. Assistant Secretary of Government (state), Uriel Jarquín Gálvez, invited Bishop Samuel Ruiz to a meeting on December 8, 1995 to coordinate actions for "normalizing the situation [...] of 42 displaced families from the Miguel Alemán Valdés *ejido* and nearby areas." On the day of the meeting, only 30 PRI supporters from different *ejidos* belonging to the organization *Paz y Justicia* appeared. The state authorities did not attend. Nonetheless, seven Chol peasants were illegally detained by the "Mayan Group" of the Public Security Police in the community of Susuclumil. The peasants were freed in May, 1996.



In mid-April, the representative for the state Secretary of Government at the negotiations, Enrique Aguilar Martínez, was dismissed. According to the General Director of Government, Mario Arturo Coutiño Farrera, this order came from a high-level official. It is not an exaggeration to say that civil war is latent in the region. The latest confrontations are proof of this fact. The communities of Los Moyos, Sabanilla, Corozal Nuevo, Huanal, Agua Fría, Mashojá, Jonishté, the highway stretch between El Limar-Venustiano Carranza and Tila, are some of the places which have been scenes of bloody confrontations between political groups in the region. This violence is generating even more violence.

The prevailing situation is very complex. At this moment, no one is able to define, in clear and absolute terms, what is going on in the northern zone of Chiapas. The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center has followed the events of the northern region. Thus, we are able to confirm the fact that state authorities have shown indifference to, or, are incapable of addressing the situation. An example of this is the dismissal of the state government's representative in the negotiations. The government has tried to solve this problem, which has social, economic, political and military dimensions, by applying the law in a rigid and partial manner. A concrete example of this is the case of those detained from Susucumil. This general violence has brought about the systematic violation of the right to life; to physical and psychological integrity; to legal guarantees and

due process; and to freedom of transit and free association. Due to the seriousness of this problem, the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center has called on civil society to take action. It has made the following demands on the state and federal governments:

1. That they create mechanisms for in-depth investigations, such as the appointment of a Special Attorney in Salto de Agua, with trained personnel in the district attorneys' offices who are part of the indigenous cultures of the region. There should be experts in forensic medicine, ballistic, chemical and agriculture, secretaries and actuaries. The government should also provide the necessary logistical support.
2. That the government agencies act in coordination with the three government branches and the COCOPA, and that they maintain the political and social conditions necessary for the continuation of the dialogue in San Andrés.
3. That the Public Security forces, in carrying out their preventive operations and investigations, respect the physical and psychological integrity of the inhabitants of the region.
4. That the Public Security police, in their preventative work, be restricted to patrolling and surveillance work in the region, with strict respect for human rights.

*June 26, 1996.*



Military camp in Patihuitz, Ocosingo.



---

# Ungovernability in the North of Chiapas

## (Part I)

Due to the violent events in the north of Chiapas, the National Network of Civilian Human Rights Organizations, *Todos los Derechos para Todos*, (144 organizations from different regions of the country) organized a fact finding visit to the municipalities of Tila and Sabanilla. The international organizations SIPAZ, Global Exchange and Unitarian Universalists also participated in the delegation.

At the time of this press conference, the brigade that traveled to the municipality of Tila had not yet returned to San Cristóbal de Las Casas with the results of their visit. Nevertheless, they sent the following information:

On June 26th, Alfredo Pérez Gómez, Francisco Encino Pérez and Pablo López Gómez (17 years old), were returning from their community after participating in a protest in front of the municipal president's office in Tila. On the road leading to the community of Revolución, they were intercepted by several individuals armed with revolvers in two vehicles, who demanded that they stop. Frightened, the three youths ran in an attempt to save themselves. The attackers responded by shooting at them, killing Pablo. The body was transported to the headquarters of the Preventive Police in Tila. By mid-day June 27, the government attorney of Yajalón announced a preliminary investigation (277/96) with the identification of the body by the deceased's brother and the declarations of the witnesses (Alfredo and Francisco). By June 28, the family of the deceased was waiting to receive the body for burial in the *ejido* Revolución.

The delegation to Sabanilla was able to gather different testimonies with respect to the communities of Moyos, Jesús Carranza and Bebedero. The testimonies regarding the events which took place on June 14 which resulted in the deaths of Arturo

Hernández Soto (17 years old) and José de Jesús (19 years old), in the community of Moyos, contradict the information given by Assistant Secretary of Government, Uriel Jarquín. The government treated the case as if it were a quarrel between drunken individuals. Information which appeared in the local media indicated that these events were the result of a confrontation over a PRD questioning of the elections of October 15, 1995.

According to the testimonies, after the detention of Guadalupe Hernández Jiménez and Carmelo Pérez López, both supporters of the PRD, and both accused of the kidnapping of Pedro López Jiménez (a former active member of the PRD and now organizer of the PRI), people had planned a march in Moyos on June 14. The PRD families from different communities gathered in the plaza of Moyos to demand the release of the two detained persons. At the same time, members of the PRI, who had met in the *Casa Ejidal*, began to shoot and throw chlorate bombs into the gathering. This is how the two youths died. In addition, Félix Martínez and Martín Pérez Pérez, both members of the PRI in their 60's, were beaten. Immediately following these events, Public Security forces arrived at the municipal headquarters of Sabanilla; no one was detained. However, Public Security Police remain in the community.

That same day, some 14 PRD families fled. In the days that followed, those who remained were pressured by pro-PRI individuals to leave town. In total, there are 67 displaced families in nine communities, including the towns of: Unión Hidalgo, Santa Catarina, Majastic and Esquipulas, among others. People in Providencia near Moyos have been threatened by PRI supporters because they gave shelter to 16 of the displaced families. The majority of the houses belonging to the displaced families have been looted and some have been burned.



The Public Security forces present in this area have acted with partiality in favor of the PRI families. Thus, we requested testimonies from some of the communities which had given shelter to the displaced.

In order to hear a different version of the events, the delegation went to the community of Moyos to interview the public officials and the commander of the Public Security Police. The *ejido* commissioner, however, did not want to make any statement, saying that "higher level officials" had already given this information to the press. We were told that if we wanted information, we should ask the municipal president in Sabanilla, Representative Samuel Sánchez and the Governor of Chiapas, who were already informed of the situation.

### **Ejido Jesús Carranza**

On June 17, 1996, the PRI families (only women and children), began to leave the town without any apparent reason, heading for Tabasco. They suspected that there was going to be violence. The women and children of PRD families did the same, but went to San Antonio los Martínez and Unión Juárez. This same day, men of the PRD returned from their corn fields and found the town deserted. Hence, the men decided to go to a house situated high up in the *ejido*, some distance from the village.

On June 19, Fernando López Martínez, catechist and active supporter of the PRD, returned to the village accompanied by his son in search of *pozol* (a corn beverage). Upon arriving in the plaza, near the church, a shot was heard and Fernando López Martínez fell dead. His son has stated that the person who fired the shot was Isauro Parceró, an active PRI member from Jesús Carranza. Half an hour later, Crucindo Álvarez Jiménez, also an active PRD supporter, was leaving Jesús Carranza on a path towards San Antonio los Martínez, when he was intercepted by Florentino Parceró Pérez and Arturo Pérez Martínez who killed Álvarez Jiménez with eight shots from a 16 calibre gun. The bodies of the victims were left where they shot due to fear of new attacks by PRI members. The relatives of the dead do not know what has happened to the bodies. The families

of the two dead were in San Antonio los Martínez and in Unión Juárez, along with 362 refugees (men, women and children). This same day, the PRI women and their children returned to their community.

On Sunday, June 23, men who were working in the communities of Nailum and Bebedero saw smoke coming out of some of the houses in the area. The number of houses burned and those responsible for this deplorable act are not known.

There are witnesses who stated that political Representative, Samuel Sánchez Sánchez, visited the community and handed over arms to the PRI members. They also stated that the leaders of the group *Paz y Justicia* in the *ejido* are the following persons: Gustavo Pérez Pérez, Antonio Pérez Martínez, Jacinto Pérez Pérez, Jose Ramon Pérez Álvarez, Domingo Martínez Pérez, Guilibaldo Martínez and Bersaín Pérez Jiménez.

According to information received on June 14, a group of PRI supporters from Jesús Carranza arrived in Bebedero, threatening and shooting at the PRD supporters of this area, saying that they were going to kill the PRD members if they did not leave the village. The women left and the men stayed to guard their houses. Some 115 persons found shelter in the village of Unión Juárez.

According to other information, Pedro Gutiérrez Hernández was an active PRD supporter who left the party when it began the demonstration in front of the municipal president's office of Sabanilla. He joined the PRI and was the very person who began to organize the people of this party. Today, villagers say that he is the one who deals in arms in Bebedero. His suppliers are ranchers from Tabasco, the Calcaño family, who have traded guns and machine guns, for livestock.

The leaders in Bebedero, members of *Paz y Justicia*, are the following: Guiliberto Pérez Gómez, Gonzalo Pérez Capetillo, Noel Pérez Gomez, Eusebio Álvarez Cruz and Joel Pérez Gutiérrez. They have contacts with the armed men of Moyos, Jesús Carranza and Cristóbal Colon. They train with and receive orders from the leaders of Crucero and Limar.



---

Given these events we conclude the following:

1. We have confirmed that there is a climate of terror and impunity aided by the negligence of public authorities in investigating the violent events in the northern area of Chiapas. These events in the region should have been addressed and investigated from the moment that the residents made their denouncements.
2. We have also verified the government's indifference towards resolving the political problems in the area.
3. In this zone, the Public Security forces are perceived to act as allies of the PRI paramilitary organization, *Paz y Justicia*.
4. All of these events have led to the displacement of a number of families who find themselves living in precarious conditions. They already have had to leave their communities and their belongings. Their physical and psychological health is affected due to the lack of food, shelter and security, and to the

resulting fear and uncertainty.

1. Thus, we recommend the following:
  - That the violent events in the northern zone of the state be investigated in a prompt and expedient
2. manner, and that those responsible for homicides be punished.
3. That the Public Security Police perform their job in an impartial manner.
  - That the state government promote conditions of dialogue which favor the solution of the political
4. problems in this area.
5. That the media report on the events which occur in the area in an objective and truthful manner.
  - That the displaced people be attended to and that the conditions necessary for their return to their communities be created; likewise, that the displaced individuals and families be compensated for
6. material damages.
  - That the paramilitary groups operating in the zone be disarmed.

*June 29, 1996*

---

## Ungovernability in the North of Chiapas (Part II)

The Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center is deeply concerned about events in the northern zone of the state, especially in the municipalities of Tila, Sabanilla, Tumbalá and Salto de Agua and the activities of the organization, *Paz y Justicia* since March 1995. We have constantly been denouncing the harassment of and threats against the residents in this area.

We are angered by the state's interim administration's inability to promptly resolve the chaotic situation in this area. Previous investigations of the different events which have occurred should have been initiated over a year ago and should have brought about concrete results. To achieve an in-depth reconciliation in the communities, the state government tried to correct the political and social problems with promises of income producing projects, donations of tons of corn flour, hand-outs, as well as some basic work and household tools (such as hoes and corrugated roofing material). All this is obviously necessary. However, the most urgent and essential need is the establishment of rule of law and an effective legal system.

The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center has testimonies and other proof that the presence of Public Security Police, who are supposedly there to maintain order, has instead become part of a privileged alliance with the PRI paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*. This organization, even with the police presence, has continued its attacks against PRD sympathizers with impunity. On several occasions, PRD supporters have been displaced from their communities of origin due to the constant threats of new attacks against their households and their families. All of this has happened right before the very eyes of public security forces. The situation has reached such an extreme level of political, social and religious intolerance that attacks have been organized against Catholic catechists who

have been expelled from communities. Churches and homes have also been looted and destroyed. The *ejidos* of Miguel Alemán Valdés, Masojá, Jolnixtié and Usipá are the most extreme examples of this situation.

The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center publically expresses its concern that the government attorney's offices in Salto de Agua and Yajalón have still done nothing in response to the denouncements made by the victims. The negligence of state and municipal authorities in thoroughly resolving this problem has led PRD members to organize in order to respond to whatever attack is directed at communities where there is a PRD majority. Such communities include the following: Masojá, Shucjá and Yoxijá in the Masojá Jolnixtié *ejido*.

These problems have intensified internal community conflicts. One example of this is the arbitrary detention on June 20 of Gabriel and Albino Jiménez Jiménez and Arturo and Alfredo López Jiménez who are being held at the Municipal Rural Agency in Panchuc Corosil in the municipality of Tila.

On June 19, members of the Federal Army arbitrarily detained Ricardo García Hernández, an indigenous man, in the community of Libertad Segunda Sección. According to his testimony, he was submitted to torture by asphyxiation. Later they drove him to the Social Readaptation Center Number 1, in Cerro Hueco Prison. Artemio and Alfredo Ramírez Torres, residents of Masojá Shucjá, are also in Cerro Hueco Prison as a result of their arbitrary detention on July 4.

The following day an Agreement of Non-Aggression and Mutual Support was signed between PRD members and the PRI in the community of Usipá, in the municipality of Tila. This pact was ratified by the General Director of Government, the leaders of



the two main political parties and representatives of the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center. It was signed on June 3 of this year, in the presence of Public Security forces in Usipá. The process of reconciliation of the communities of the area is fundamental. However, the agreement from Usipá is only the first agreement that has been signed and it is only related to one community. The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center would like to advise the public that Usipá is a community which is geographically independent of the area where the paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*, has control through the use of terror.

The aforementioned accord was possible precisely because *Paz and Justicia* is not a predominant force

in Usipá. However, it is extremely irresponsible of the state government to suppose that the problems in the northern area have been resolved with this one agreement.

*Paz y Justicia* physically controls the lowlands of Tila. The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center has testimonies which prove that this paramilitary group has made threats and caused confrontations, together with the Federal Army and the Public Security Police, in Miguel Alemán Valdés and El Limar. These acts demonstrate the state of ungovernability which exists in the northern area of Chiapas.

July 12, 1996



Military camp in Patihuitz, Ocosingo



Army patrol in Sabanilla



Patrolling Sabanilla



## Chapter III

### Opinions and Analysis

---

# Hunger in Chiapas<sup>1</sup>

*Miguel Angel Granados Chapa*

Today, the San Andrés talks have not resumed, but the dialogue is not broken. Even though the conditions that led to the worst moment in the peace process in Chiapas (not including February 9, 1995 when communication links had not been established) have not been thoroughly addressed, they have at least improved. The decision of the different parties and their intermediaries helped postpone a possible rupture in the process.

The imminent and eminent dangers have only been pushed aside for the moment. This, however, is significant. Credit for this should go especially to the commissions which accompany the process: the mediation commission, headed by Bishop Samuel Ruiz (which has been blamed for the impasse) and the Commission for Agreement and Pacification (COCOPA). Members of this Commission, congressmen from the four parties, will meet in the next few hours with the Zapatista command. The situation had been so critical that even this meeting had been suspended. Before the weekend, however, talks will resume and they will be the key to reopen the dialogue. Perhaps the postponed Indigenous Forum on Democracy and Justice, scheduled for May 28 (and canceled due to the crisis this month), will never happen.

In the legal arena, there are two sides to the problem. Elorriaga and Entzin made their appeal last Friday and the appeals court judge should pass sentence within eight days. This will happen if the judge does not call for proceedings to gather further evidence. We think that this is important so that the judge will understand the implications of his decision. If these proceedings take place, the judge could hear the viewpoint of COCOPA which is a parliamentary body created by law.

The term for the appeal of another alleged Zapatista, convicted not for belonging to the EZLN like Elorriaga and Entzin, but for sabotaging a Federal Electricity Commission installation, has begun. Any hope that the law will be justly applied in both cases is weakened by procedural aberrations in both trials. In the Coatzacoalcas case, which sentenced Francisco Alejandro García Santiago to six years in prison, the legal experts carried out their work by remote control. They never visited the allegedly damaged installation but were able to determine how the damage was caused and based their accusations on this.

In the military world, information is contradictory. Last week, General Mario Renán Castillo stated that military operations against narcotrafficking had been suspended so as not to generate confusion in the areas under Zapatista influence. On the other hand, a group of 30 civilian observers summoned by CONPAZ visited five of these areas during the first two days of June and their report is alarming.

The civilian observation team especially focused on the disruption of daily life in the communities in the conflict zone due to the strong military presence. The members saw how traps have been set and how the military use dogs which attack people indiscriminately. They spoke about the effects of prostitution and breaking into homes without a search warrant. They saw the military training of civilian "loyalists" and the harassment of those who are not considered as such. Observers noted the invasion of land for military installations with along irrational exploitation [of resources]. But the most serious issue, which should be thoroughly investigated by impartial organizations, is the cultivation of drugs by members of the Army. There

---

<sup>1</sup> Article published in the column, "Plaza Pública," in the newspaper, *Reforma*, June 5, 1996.



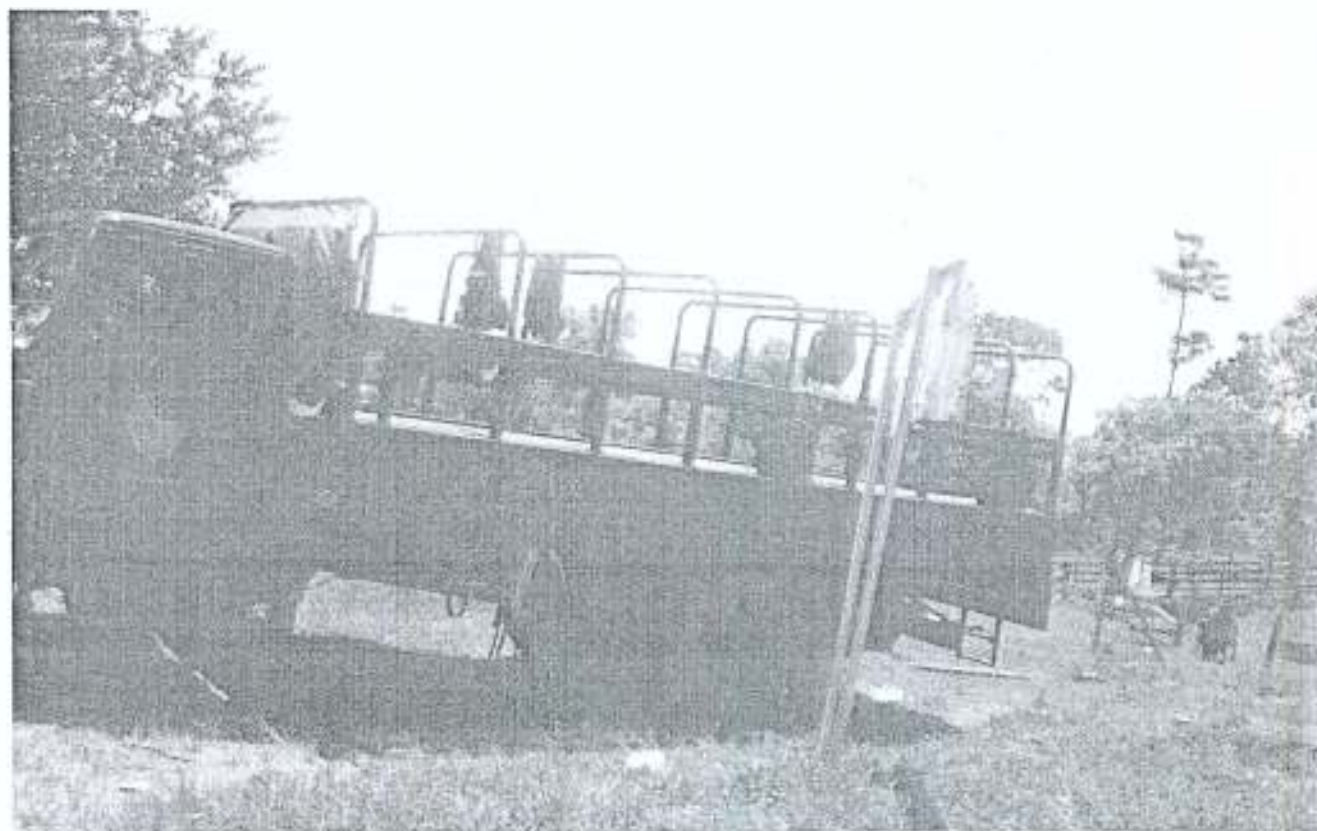
is suspicion that nightly low-level flights serve to spread marijuana seeds in the conflict area. This latter leads to the justification of military mobilizations to pursue the drug traffickers.

The report is general and is based on first impressions. Thus, its content could be modified and even contradicted by a further investigation that would use this visit of citizens invited by CONPAZ as a starting point.

Whatever the case may be, it appears that one of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, "War," remains in the wings. But, another is taking his place in various regions of Chiapas... "Hunger." Hunger that is motivated by political instability and uncertainty. In Bachajón, for example, where fear has reigned ever since the cruel murders and destruction of May 5 and 6, Sister Ester Cuevas Regla of the Congregation of the Divine Shepherd writes:

*This situation of extreme violence has meant that more than a thousand indigenous brothers and sisters, men, women, girls, boys and elderly persons have had to flee, abandoning their homes, belongings, fields and animals. One group of these brothers and sisters found shelter in Ocosingo, others in Sitalá, Yajalón, Tuxtla Gutiérrez and others in different communities neighboring this town. They are still unable to return to their homes.*

*Thus, it has been impossible to plant crops and tend to the fields. And so they must add the hunger of these months to their age old hunger. They will now suffer from hunger because they have not been able to work their fields and there will be no crops to reap at harvest time.*



The Army in Bachajón, Chilón



---

## The Cost of War<sup>2</sup>

Antonio García de León

*All of the prisons and army barracks should be converted into hospitals, into schools; another piece should be added to all of the tanks, converting them into tractors to plow the land; all of the cannons should be converted into pipes full of drinking water ... there is no need for artillery helicopters, bombs and tanks so that the people can have what they need: justice, freedom and democracy...*

*(Major Moisés of the EZLN)*

In this climate of unemployment and devastation caused by the continuation of the same kind of policies which have lead our country to where it is today, we must think about the cost of irresponsible and erratic actions which may lead to a resumption of the conflict. With the rupture of the National Political Agreement, the obstinacy of the media and the signs of tension from the government after the first San Andrés Sacamch'en de los Pobres accords (resumption of low-level flights, Mexican Army expeditions into the jungle, increased repression of political prisoners, militarization of the presidential figure), there are questions to be asked. Wouldn't democracy be cheaper? Wouldn't it be more profitable (in the economic sense), to create a just and dignified peace for all Mexicans? Wouldn't this gives us a much greater "comparative advantage" in the eyes of the outside world? Wouldn't it generate a better climate for investment in production? Wouldn't this cut excessive government spending?

A true national, political accord signed by all sides, (without disputing the Zapatistas' historic role in this process), could avoid the conflict on the horizon in most of the country. Détente would be less costly, since, within the context of a national transition to democracy, there would be an end to the war in Chiapas. Similar conflicts in other regions could also be avoided. In this same manner, it would put an end to the Army's costly and inefficient activity in today's occupied zone. In strictly regional terms, a complete agrarian reform in Chiapas would also be much cheaper.

The war which began in January 1994, is also a source of the present monetary crisis. At the moment, there are between 40,000 and 60,000 mobilized troops in Chiapas (a conservative estimate) and 30 large military bases (which in some cases have illegally appropriated lands, as in the case of Guadalupe Tepeyac). There have been enormous amounts of money spent on feeding and housing these troops as well as on salaries. There are the costs for fuel and vehicle maintenance, patrol equipment, road and airport maintenance, engineering operations and supplies. This public spending has repercussions for the production sectors of society and through taxes, services and salaries, has hit the poor people the hardest. And all of this does not even include the looting by soldiers on the *ejidos* in the Zapatista region.

According to estimates from a talk presented in the "Dialogue of Civilian Society," held in March ("How Much does the Federal Army in Chiapas Cost?", March 18, 1995), and calculations made following the February 9, 1995 offensive, the cost of the war is quite considerable. According to available data from Mexico's budget expenditures for the 1994 fiscal year, 6.2 billion new pesos were appropriated for national defense (in 1995 the value increased by 14%; hence, 7.1 billion new pesos were budgeted). In 1994, the additional 880 million pesos were the equivalent of \$251 million dollars and all of this amount was destined for Chiapas. This value is close to the possible cost of the military campaign in 1994.

---

<sup>2</sup> Article published in the newspaper, *La Jornada*, page 1, May 11, 1995.



Food for the troops is calculated at 15 new pesos per person per day. This is 219 million new pesos or \$63 million dollars in 1994. This cost has increased after the devaluation (December 1994), since many of the provisions are imported; military equipment, computers and, above all, food, which is supplied by the U.S. Army (as with a lot of other junk which the "Empire" distributes through forced sales to its colonies). There are rations of corned beef hash, pork, rice in barbeque sauce, Tabasco sauce, etc. All of this has generated a new problem with respect to waste in the occupied areas. Thus, the amount has risen to \$102.2 million dollars per year. And, thanks to continual reconnaissance flights, fuel is also an expense. The figure stands at \$6 million dollars annually due to increases of flights at certain times of the year. These are the figures if we only consider 1500 flight units per day with a daily cost of ten dollars each. The total costs of war in Chiapas approach \$200 million dollars annually. This does not include the cost of the recent offensive, testing and supplies, the purchase of new airplanes, tanks and helicopters during the Salinas administration, the cost of ammunition, costs related to loss of life and equipment and hospitalization expenses. Neither does this include the salaries of foreign military advisors, public officials and legislators from the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and COCOPA nor the advisors of the government agency ARIC which is an active participant in the Counter Insurgency Plan.

The Chiapas Plan was meant to distribute \$50 million dollars per year for the construction of local highways

and roads, irrigation systems and other projects which were never carried out. The money did serve to enrich the different governors. With the \$200 million allotted for military expenses in Chiapas (money which will come from evershrinking wages, rising interest rates, the shrinking of the internal market and the destruction of the country's productive process), there could be a Development Plan which is neither populist nor in the style of PRONASOL. There could also be a complete agrarian reform. All this would happen if the government had even the least intention and capacity to resolve the conflict at its roots. It would not have to revert to a military solution, persecution, the permanent violation of human rights, control of the media and use of the media for slander. There would not be the immense corruption which permits a former Mexican president to be an associate of AP/Dow Jones, representing a foreign government. There would not be other officials from the same political party who have immense fortunes and property outside the country which they acquired illicitly (the products of illicit concessions or from the officials' close links to narcotraffickers and organized crime).

Thus, the end of the conflict depends upon the coordinated and conscious action of civil society, organizations and parties. It demands the unity of all forces. For once and for all this would heal the wound which deeply affects the poorest of the poor who are the most persecuted... those whose just cause is an example of dignity and sovereignty to the entire world.



# Northern Chiapas: Dozens of Communities Live Under Civil War<sup>3</sup>

Hermann Bellinghausen

In northern Chiapas, dozens of communities are involved in a civil war which is neither hidden nor masked. It is an all out war where impunity reigns. During recent weeks it has become clear that the violence targets those indigenous communities ruled by the PRD or by no political party at all. Paramilitary groups clearly linked to the PRI *caciques* in the region as well as Public Security forces have created a climate of terror that has yet to receive public attention.

Representatives from the communities of Tila, Salto de Agua, Sabanilla, Tumbalá and Ocosingo have come to the special forum in San Cristóbal to present official denunciations and demands, casting out their testimonies like messages in bottles into the ocean. The air of the five indigenous spokesmen who sit behind the formica table is one of sadness and despair; they seem almost opaque, as if covered in a veil of ashes. The scene is even more melancholic because it is held in a small press room. Dozens of reporters, photographers and cameramen surround the men... and listen.

One by one they speak. They read documents, the minutes of the atrocities. Within the span of a few days, 25 indigenous people have been killed while others have been disappeared. Another two thousand have been displaced after bloody land evictions. Over and over again, *Paz y Justicia* is held responsible for the persecutions.

Indeed, names are too much. Goebbels would be happy. *Paz y Justicia* has armed checkpoints around the community of Nuevo Limar in Tila, one of its preferred targets. The organization, *Grupo Social*, which proclaims itself to be non-partisan and has a majority following, is under a state of siege. "Since

June 18, *Paz y Justicia* has set up checkpoints on the outskirts of the village, along the road and paths. Some teachers have not been able to leave for their workplaces and, as we understand it, are virtually hostages. The road to Tila is blocked by groups stationed every 200 to 500 meters who order people out of any vehicles and search them."

The denouncements from El Limar include the raping of minors, bloody and savage beatings of men and women, assassinations, kidnappings, expulsions, and the destruction of homes.

The spokesmen from Usipá (Tila) and Los Luceros Segunda Sección (Salto de Agua) give identical or similar accounts. There is someone behind the hostilities. They are armed, illegal groups. They are aided and abetted or tolerated and sometimes assisted by the state and municipal police. The groups associate openly with armed forces camped in the region as well as with special forces such the Maya Corps (patrols trained in mountain survival, "scouts" living off roots who have long hair despite the fact that they are soldiers who have formally been assigned with police duties).

The bottles that these men cast into the sea in the press conference have many addresses: the President of Mexico, the EZLN, the UN, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the PRD, Amnesty International, the CNDH (National Commission for Human Rights), the COCOPA, the CONAI, non-governmental organizations, the forum participants and whoever will listen.

In many cases, they know the material and an intellectual authors of the assassinations. The names of the "commanders," are former soldiers, they assure

<sup>3</sup>Article published in the newspaper, *La Jornada*, page 12, June 4, 1996.



us, and all the competent authorities have their names. In any case, there are many names repeated in the different denouncements. There are dozens of them. Hostilities began to increase in Tila, Tumbalá, Salto de Agua, and Sabanilla in 1995, but since June 1996 they have escalated at an alarming rate.

This is why the plaintiffs are so serious while they sit there and read. Another speaker represents Flor de Cacao, a community bordering Guatemala. He lists the names of all the people who destroyed 45 homes on different dates during recent months and "assassinated two friends named José Antonio Suárez Sánchez and Santiago Cortés Gutiérrez."

The worst part is that Usipá, El Limón, Flor de Cacao, and El Lucero Segunda Sección represent only small samples of the people's ordeal in this area bordering with Tabasco. It is so widespread that public forces from the municipality of Macuspana

in the neighboring state have been involved in some of the violent events.

The organization Kichañob de Tumbalá adds more denouncements, more stories of displacements and torture in the communities of Miguel Alemán, Masojá, Shuja Agua Fría, Joñixtie, Libertad, Yochijá, Pantzuc, Corosal, Susuclumil, Tzaquil. A low-level official of the state government in Tuxtla accepted the reports presented by these Tzeltals and Chols who virtually live with their necks on the block.

Apparently, the case is being handled. This is a relief... Isn't it?

Thus, this is the climate of an area in conflict with serious problems on the eve of the Special Forum for State Reform. The clock is ticking. The offenses worsen. And nothing seems to deactivate the belligerence of the groups which are always identified with the PRI.



Military camp in San Quintín, Ocosingo.



# Chiapas: A Bloody Harvest<sup>4</sup>

Luis Hernández Navarro

It happens every time. Now that there is some progress in the San Andrés Dialogue, the partial solution to the crisis brought on by the sentencing of Elorriaga and Entzin, and the Forum on Democracy and Justice, we have a wave of bloody events in Chiapas. In less than ten days, 11 people have lost their lives in bloody events in the municipalities of Tila, Sabanilla and Simojovel. With this, the list of deaths since the beginning of the year resulting from forced evictions, confrontations and ambushes reached 31.

Certainly, violence in this state is not a novelty. For the past 12 years, different documents from human rights organizations have given detailed reports of the assassinations and imprisonment of many peasant leaders. Along the same lines, from 1974 on and particularly in Chamula, the Indigenous *cacicazgo* (despotic leadership) has violently expelled their opponents from the communities.

Nonetheless, the violence in this state has worsened since the military offensive against the EZLN in February 1995. Since that date, paramilitary groups with ties to the local power groups have appeared. These groups differ from the *guardias blancas* which operate in state regions such as Jaltenango, La Concordia, Chicomuselo (organized by the *caciques* of old, such as the Orantes and Ruiz families), or in Soconusco (promoted by the "modern" agro-industrialists). They differ in that they operate in regions where the majority are indigenous people. So, if the actions of the *guardias blancas* against the peasants are presented to the public as a class confrontation, the violence of such groups as *Paz y Justicia*, *los Chinchulines* and several other unnamed groups, is presented as a conflict among Indians belonging to different political parties.

The violence in the northern highlands region emerges from a precise context. First, the region no longer plays the role of a reserve of an indigenous labor force for the *fincas* and plantations of other areas. Poverty conditions have worsened and there is a lack of options for employment. Second, there is only a partial and inadequate solution of the agrarian problem in relation to properties that overlap. There is uncertainty with respect to land tenure and unsatisfactory answers to requests for land distribution or requests for increasing property size. Third, there is a long history of abuse and humiliation at the hands of *finca* owners. Fourth, the old *finca* owners corner marketing opportunities, supply distribution and loans.

Since 1974, the agrarian struggle has upset the power structure of the region. The land seizures in Tila, Sabanilla and El Bosque, the attempts to unionize in Simojovel, and the distribution of land have dismantled the traditional power of the old *finca* owners. However, in the north of the state, the relationships among the power groups that had been established from Yajalón (such as the *cacicazgos* of the Utrilla family) have not changed drastically. These *cacique* "empires" have built networks of power within the municipalities and communities, like small solar systems, with indigenous leaders or *ladino* merchants. To build these systems, they used the structure of the CNC (National Peasant Confederation - one of various PRI sectors).

The progress of the struggle of communities since January 1994 put these *cacique* empires and their local satellites "up against the wall." Their response to this popular upheaval was to use violence, organizing paramilitary groups with the Indigenous people who form part of the traditional power network and are active within the PRI ranks.

<sup>4</sup>Article published in the newspaper, *La Jornada*, page 9, June 25, 1996.



Peace in Chiapas, which means peace in the entire country, continues to be in danger. It is in danger not only because of the frailty of the negotiations between the government and the EZLN, but also because of the precarious political stability (which is transitory) which sometimes exist. In addition to these dangers, we now have hunger, provoked by the decrease in basic food supplies throughout wide regions of the state. Furthermore, there is the impunity which protects the physical and intellectual authors responsible for the daily assassinations of the impoverished Indigenous people.

The dismantling of the paramilitary groups which have thrived under the protection of public officials and PRI legislators in the state is an urgent, high priority task. The *Chinchulines*, *Paz y Justicia*, the *Tomas Munzer* of Ocosingo, the *Fuerzas Armadas*

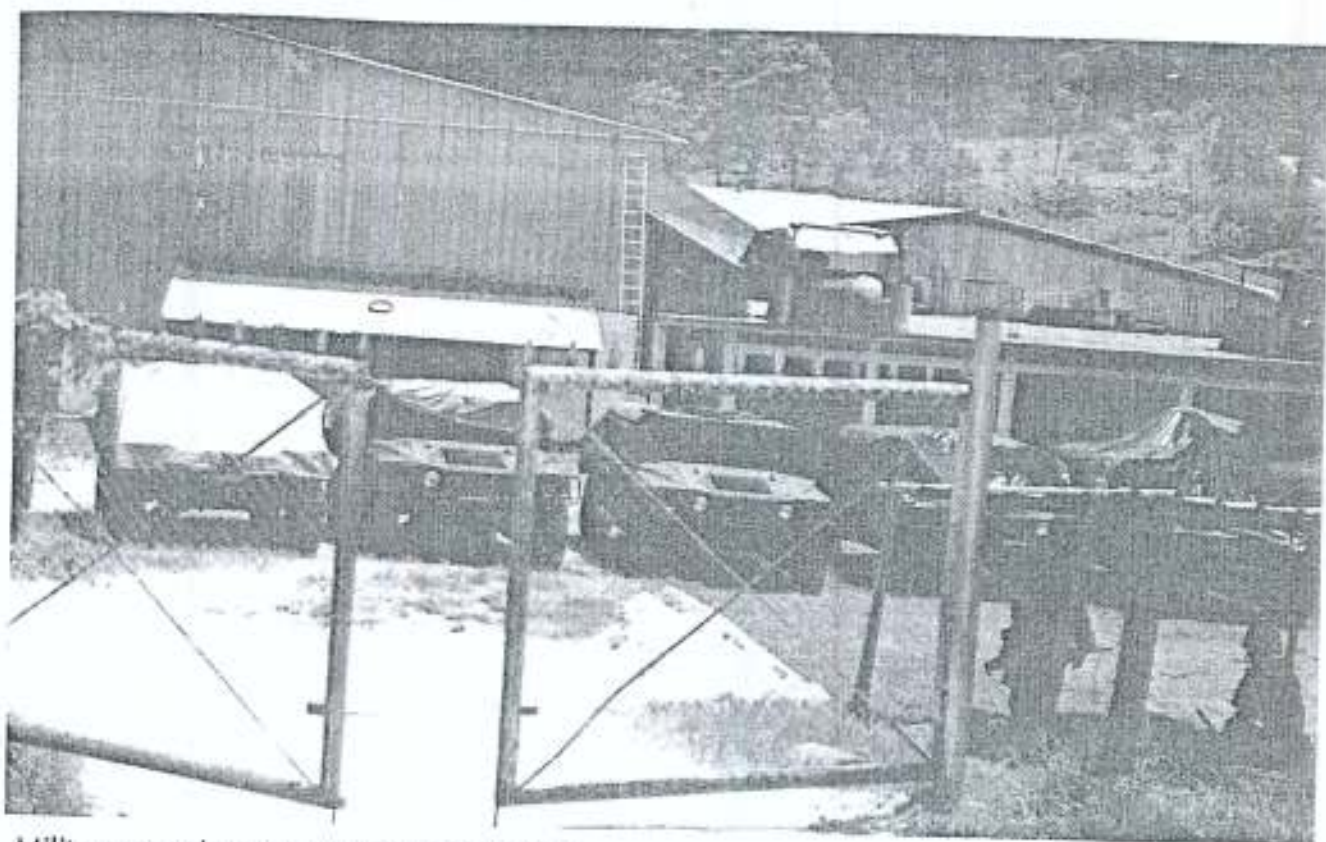
*del Pueblo* of Venustiano Carranza (all composed of PRI members), and all of the *guardias blancas* in the service of the *caciques*, must disappear. At the same time there must be social aid programs for the people who live in extreme poverty. Finally, we must open peaceful and democratic channels of a political nature for the civic expression of the different interest groups in the state.

Thus, the Forum on Democracy and Justice (summoned by the EZLN) which will be held in San Cristóbal de Las Casas in the next few days, is very relevant. People hope that this forum will provide the basis for the creation of the Zapatista Front of National Liberation as a national political body. It would be a very serious error for the government to try and stop the formation of this coalition.



The Army in Nuevo Momón, Las Margaritas





Military camp between Ocosingo and Chilon



General demands: Disarm the paramilitary and the *guardias blancas*.





Demands in Palenque: "We want the Army out of our communities."



Demanding the disarmament of the *guardias blancas*.



Military patrol in Bachajón, Chilon



"We want the Army out of our communities."





Military camp in Taniperlas



Military camp in Taniperlas

## Chapter IV

### Chronology of the Militarization, Paramilitarization and Assassinations in Chiapas: January - June 1996



DA

17







---

# Chronology of the Militarization, Paramilitarization and Assassinations in Chiapas: January - June 1996

The sources used for this chronology were the following: *El Día, El Financiero, El Heraldo, El Nacional, El Sol de Mexico, El Universal, Excelsior, La Jornada, Novedades, Proceso, Punto, Reforma, Unomásuno*. The dates are those of publication in the newspapers.

## **Wednesday, January 10, 1996**

Members of the paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*, are now members of Tila's municipal office. This includes the elected representative, Samuel Sanchez, who has close ties with *Paz y Justicia*.

## **Saturday, January 13, 1996**

The Ministry of National Defense (Sedena), is building army barracks which will lodge a regiment of the Motorized Cavalry in Tapachula where the XXV Infantry Battalion is stationed.

## **Monday, January 15, 1996**

Jorge Madrazo, President of the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), stated that to speak of *guardias blancas* in Chiapas is to refer to specific types of gunmen. "*Guardias blancas* and *caciques* are almost the same subject." Thus, in 1995, the CNDH issued three recommendations to the government to counter these armed groups. The CNDH dealt with the cases of Chicomuselo, Nuevo Zinacantán and Palenque.

## **Saturday, January 20, 1996**

Last year, the State Commission on Human Rights (CEDH) issued 56 recommendations, 42 of which were directed to State Attorney General, Jorge Enrique Hernández, for human rights violations.

## **Wednesday, January 24, 1996**

The PRD denounced the existence of an alleged paramilitary group known as the *Chinchulines* or

*Grupo Juvenil* in the Indigenous municipality of Chilón. Four women and a young man of 17, all Indigenous peasants from the southern part of the state spoke to the CEDH about the torture, arrests, illegal detentions and homicides which they have suffered at the hands of the State Judicial Police, Public Security forces, and the Federal Judicial Police.

## **Friday, January 26, 1996**

*La Unión Campesina Popular Francisco Villa* stated that German citizens, Lawrence Hutler, the Shimp family and the Orantes Balbuena family (who own coffee plantations Liquidambar, Prusia, Santa Rita, La Cruz, Montebello, Zayula and Chicharras, among others) have *guardias blancas* under their control that prevented the *Unión* from occupying lands which "by presidential decree," belong to the municipality of Ángel Albino Corzo, previously Jaltenango.

## **Saturday, January 27, 1996**

Near the community of Tzacbatul in Ocosingo, three armed men beat and threatened to kill Norberta Lopez, a Dominican nun who works with the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas.

## **Tuesday, January 30, 1996**

The Federal Army initiated a new air, land and water surveillance operation. This is to prevent the use of the Marqués de Comillas region (near the so-called conflict area) and the region of the Soconusco (on the coast of Chiapas) by South American drug cartels for cultivating drugs which are later sent to the United States.



***Wednesday, January 31, 1996***

Peasants from the Roberto Barrios ejido, in the municipality of Palenque, stated that the Federal Army and the Federal Judicial Police invaded their community on January 26.

***Sunday, February 4, 1996***

On February 2, the Federal Army installed a camp next to the Roberto Barrios ejido in the municipality of Palenque.

***Friday, February 9, 1996***

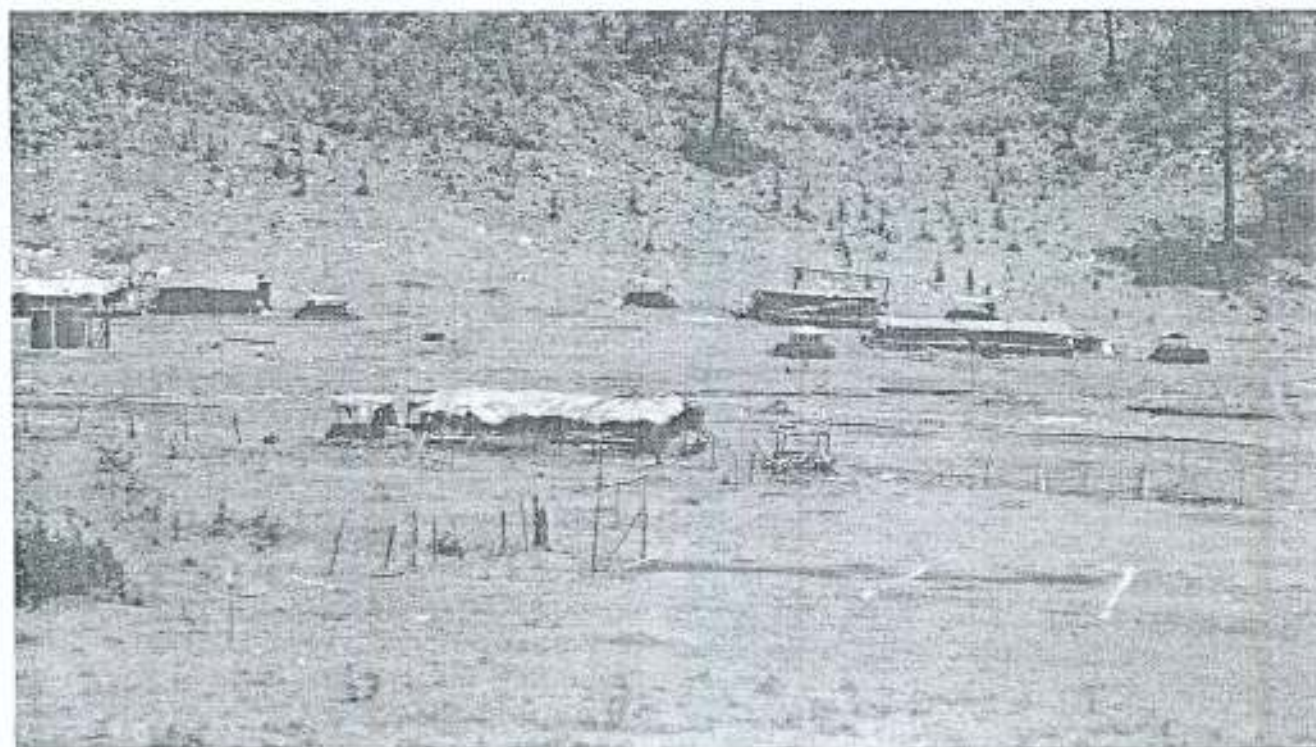
It has been one year since President Ernesto Zedillo announced that arrest warrants had been issued for several alleged leaders of the EZLN. One day later, on February 10, 1995, Federal Army troops occupied several zones which had been under EZLN control. They are still there today. The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human RightsCenter believes that the

actions of the Federal Army were directed against the communities of civilian residents to punish and frighten them and to obtain information from them, as well as to break up their social organization. The Army also views the civilian population as the enemy, continuously violating the peoples' human rights.

***Saturday, February 10, 1996***

Maximiliano Hernández, brother of the leader of the *Organización Proletaria Emiliano Zapata-Bloque de Fuerzas Proletarias*, (OPEZ-BFP), Noé Hernández, was tortured and assassinated by four members of the Ignacio Zaragoza ejido, Frontera Hidalgo.

Alejandro García was forced to confess to being a member of the EZLN under psychological torture and through the kidnaping of his parents and brother. He served one year in prison for the alleged sabotage of a high voltage tower of the Federal Electricity Commission.



Military camp in Patihuitz, Ocosingo



---

**Sunday, February 11, 1996**

The former residents of Guadalupe Tepeyac requested that the government withdraw the soldiers who have occupied their town for one year.

**Wednesday, February 14, 1996**

In the last two years, more than 600 peasants from different organizations have died due to agrarian problems near the conflict area, according to statistics from human rights defense organizations. The State Democratic Assembly of the People of Chiapas (AEDEPCH), stated that peasants have been assassinated in conflicts with state Public Security forces, *guardias blancas* and paramilitary groups.

**Friday, February 16, 1996**

A thousand peasants from the *Organización Regional de Cafeticultores* of Ocosingo and the *Organización Campesina Francisco Villa* took over the municipal building in Ocosingo demanding that the Federal Army stops intimidating the people in six new settlements in the area.

Twenty masked persons assassinated members of an indigenous family on the José María Morelos *ejido* in the municipality of Huitiupán.

**Monday, February 26, 1996**

Gonzalo Ituarte, Secretary of the National Mediation Commission (CONAI), declared that the military presence is largely responsible for difficulties in the negotiations. It has affected the life of communities by bringing in alcoholism, drugs and prostitution.

**Wednesday, February 28, 1996**

National Defense Secretary, General Enrique Cervantes, visited the troops stationed in the municipalities which form the conflict zone and gave special recognition to officers of the 24th Calvary Regiment and the *Fuerza de Tarea Arcoiris* (the Rainbow Task Force), who are responsible for counter insurgency operations.

**Friday, March 1, 1996**

Opposition parties condemned the excessive reaction of the Public Security Police who provoked a confrontation with more than 2,000 fans who were attending a baseball game in Palenque. In the end, three people were injured, the municipal headquarters were burned and three federal offices were destroyed.

**Friday, March 8, 1996**

In the communities of the municipality of Tila, groups identified as PRI supporters in which traditional *caciques* participate, attacked the people. They were armed with machetes and many had firearms. They have wounded many people and burned a church.

**Saturday, March 9, 1996**

In one of the largest demonstrations of Indigenous women in the state, approximately 5,000 Zapatista women from the jungle, the highlands and the border zone of Chiapas, demanded the demilitarization of the regions occupied by the Mexican Army, which has been in the area for more than one year, as well as the disbanding of the *guardias blancas*.

**Monday, March 11, 1996**

Mexicans are not the only ones involved in espionage services and operations in southeast Mexico. Chiapas, in particular, has turned into a meeting place of international espionage with the participation of Spain, Italy, France, Argentina, Peru, the United States, Guatemala, Israel and Germany.

The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center denounced the illegal detention of peasants who are linked to the foreign priests who were expelled from the country last year in the northern region of the state.

**Wednesday, March 13, 1996**

One year after entering Cañada Livingston in search of EZLN leaders, the Federal Army initiated new incursions with soldiers transported by helicopters.



Inhabitants of the region stated that one thousand soldiers are camped in small Indigenous communities. Military sources stated that troop movements are related to future social services which the army will provide in Altamirano.

**Thursday, March 14, 1996**

The paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*, formed by PRI activists, destroyed the *Señor de Tila* Catholic church in the community of Tzaquil. Parish priest, Heriberto Cruz, denounced that this group has been intimidating seven communities in the area.

**Sunday, March 17, 1996**

According to official sources, the National Defense Ministry has immediate plans to build a military camp in La Realidad where part of the EZLN command is located.

**Monday, March 18, 1996**

The EZLN stated that the Federal Army has increased its air and land movements in the jungle and the highlands during the last two days.

**Tuesday, March 19, 1996**

The EZLN declared that the federal government is trying to break down the dialogue or make it more difficult through militarization of the communities. They added that if the government continues with this type of pressure, they will not be able to continue the dialogue.

**Thursday, March 21, 1996**

A forced eviction carried out by state Public Security forces on the San Luis finca in the municipality of Pichucalco resulted in three people dead, two seriously wounded and 57 detained on the property of former banker, Carlos Cabal Peniche. This property, owned by the San Luis del Sureste banana packing company was under control of the *Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos (CIOAC)*.

The EZLN stated that they are alarmed at the government's proposal to install more military camps

in Zapatista communities. The EZLN demanded an end to patrols and called for the withdrawal of the Federal Army from settlements and communities.

**Friday, March 22, 1996**

In a Public Security Police operation, peasants of the *Gran Poder* property in the municipality of Nicolas Ruiz were forcefully evicted. During the confrontation, three peasants were killed and 230 injured. The shoot-out between police and peasant members of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indios (CNPI)* lasted six hours. Through land and air activity, police forces succeeded in taking control of this municipality, considered to be sympathetic to the EZLN and presently governed by a PRD mayor.

**Sunday, March 24, 1996**

The Federal Government's negotiating team stated that Federal Army troops will maintain their positions in the conflict zone vis a vis the EZLN refusal to discuss the topic of military distension and disarmament.

**Monday, March 25, 1996**

On Wednesday, March 20, one day after President Ernesto Zedillo declared that the land disputes have been solved in Chiapas with the signing of an agrarian agreement (which, in theory, will benefit 58,000 peasants), the state government initiated a police offensive against peasant organizations which control 90,000 hectares of land. The initial result of this offensive was five peasants dead and more than 20 people wounded, both indigenous persons and police.

**Wednesday, March 27, 1996**

In the assembly hall of the House of Representatives, PRD federal representative, Adriana Luna Parra, placed bullets, a police helmet visor and a pair of boxes on the lectern. One box had the following in Spanish: Ministry of Defense, Department of Military Industry, 50 cartridges, 30 millimeter calibre, normal bullets. The other box had the following in English: Made in USA, Twenty Cartridges. According to her testimony, this is what the people of Nicolas Ruiz





Military camp along the Ocosingo-Taniperlas route.

found after the forced eviction which cost the lives of three peasants and one police officer.

**Thursday, March 28, 1996**

Hundreds of PRD supporters took to the streets and occupied the municipal offices in Sabanilla, demanding the resignation of PRI mayor, Benedicto Jaime Pérez, whom they accuse of provoking violence and of organizing armed groups.

**Thursday, April 4, 1996**

The National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) sent a recommendation to the governor asking him to sanction the State Judicial Police and Public Security Police for their use of excessive force against members of the *Unión Campesina Popular Francisco Villa*.

**Sunday, April 7, 1996**

According to the government organization, *Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo - Unión de Uniones (ARIC)*, there are constant confrontations in the territories under guerrilla influence. They denounced that agrarian leader, Pedro Satiz Gómez,

was assassinated on March 23.

**Tuesday, April 9, 1996**

The leadership of the *Organización Proletaria Emiliano Zapata (OPEZ)* denounced that some 40 men carrying high power rifles and pistols used exclusively by the Army and dressed in black uniforms and ski masks looted the Los Centros property on the border with Guatemala. The assailants raped 10 women and beat 15 peasants who had invaded this part of the Suchiate area.

**Friday, April 12, 1996**

The Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Center announced that one Indigenous person died and at least another five were injured in violent clashes between PRI and PRD supporters over the control of the mayor's office in the municipality of Sabanilla. Since last March 22, PRD members from several communities have taken over the municipal office to demand the dismissal of PRI mayor, Benedicto Jaime Pérez, whom they accuse of "having armed or aided and abetted the PRI paramilitary groups in the municipalities of Sabanilla and Simojovel".



---

***Saturday, April 13, 1996***

A confrontation between PRI and PRD members in Zinacantán left one person wounded.

In the municipality of Sabanilla, five PRI members were kidnaped.

The president of the PRD's state committee, Arturo Luna, confirmed that last April 6, three PRD members, Rosalindo Cruz, Mateo Torres and Antonio Juárez were assassinated in Unión Juárez in the municipality of Sabanilla.

***Monday, April 15, 1996***

Major Moisés of the EZLN declared that the Federal Army is conducting "widespread mobilizations" in the communities of San Andrés Larráinzar and that the soldiers are installing two new camps in this area. There are now five military camps near Oventic.

***Tuesday, April 16, 1996***

The National Mediation Commission (CONAI) stated that the mobilizations of the Federal Army in the highlands and the jungle are considered by the EZLN to be "a means of pressure which does not favor the process of dialogue."

***Wednesday, April 17, 1996***

The commander of the VII Military Region, General Mario Renán Castillo, stated that the destruction of 11 sites where drugs were being grown near Oventic has been completed. He denied that the conflict zone is being militarized.

***Friday, April 19, 1996***

The COCOPA considers that recent army mobilizations in the highlands and the jungle have created "a tense situation" which should be discussed in the San Andrés dialogues. Meanwhile, the governmental delegation has decided that there is no reason to review this issue in the dialogues because "there has been no incident of military persecution" against members of the EZLN.

The municipal president of Altamirano, Rosario Santiz, requested that the authorities withdraw the Mexican Army and Public Security Police from this region. In the past few days, these "guardians of municipal order" beat two people and both forces have violated the autonomy of the municipality. The withdrawal of the Mexican Army is requested because under the excuse of providing social services, the Army has stirred up the residents since it arrived with tanks and trucks full of weapons.

The Ministry of National Defense rejected the fact that American military advisors are operating in the so-called conflict zone where there are more than 10,000 soldiers as part of a contingency plan to halt Zapatista guerrilla mobilizations.

Mario Renán Castillo, chief of the VII Military Region, which controls Chiapas and Tabasco, denied that preparations are underway to attack the bases and communities under EZLN control.

***Wednesday, April 24, 1996***

The EZLN stated that the Federal Army is indeed carrying out a "plan of counterinsurgency" under the excuse of "providing health services, supplying corn and other products and also by direct espionage." They accused the Army of using "alcoholism and prostitution to destroy the social fabric and the unity of the villages and communities in the highlands and the jungle regions." The EZLN also accused the Federal Army of preparing civilian patrols composed of Indigenous and peasant PRI members, as part of this counterinsurgency action.

In the setting of the San Andrés Larráinzar dialogues, Comandante Hortensia read a communiqué stating that the U.S. government has designed a plan of counterinsurgency similar to the one it used in Central America.

Zapatista advisors stated that in order for the dialogue to continue under satisfactory conditions, the Federal Army should withdraw to its barracks.

***Thursday, April 25, 1996***

Francisco Mayo Martínez, Secretary of Political



Education and Human Rights for the PRD in Chiapas, received a death threat.

**Monday, April 29, 1996**

According to Julio Moguel, member of the coordinating committee of advisors to the EZLN, one year has passed since the peace talks were initiated and the Indigenous people are living in worse conditions than before. The Federal Army has increasingly surrounded the EZLN communities.

**Monday, May 6, 1996**

The PRI affiliated *Chinchulines* attacked peasants in Bachajón, in the municipality of Chilón. This attack came shortly after the election of an *ejido* commissioner prompted members of the *ejido* to assassinate the leader of the *Chinchulines*, Jerónimo Gómez. In reprisal, members of the *Chinchulines*, who have occupied the municipal headquarters for 15 days, surrounded the village of Bachajón and burned several houses belonging to PRD officials, including that of the municipal president, Manuel

Gómez. They also burned part of the Jesuit monastery. The Jesuit monastery also has a human rights center which has actively denounced the criminal acts of this armed group.

**Tuesday, May 7, 1996**

The National Network of Human Rights Organizations, *Todos los Derechos para Todos*, protested to state and federal authorities against the violent acts provoked by the *Chinchulines*.

More than 120 elements of the state Public Security Police entered the *ejido* of Bachajón after the earlier violence. According to communiqués from the state government, there were six people killed, one wounded, 23 houses and six vehicles burned and the partial burning. The doors of the church, monastery and home of the Jesuit priests were also burned.

The Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Raúl Vera, was stopped by *Chinchulines* who insulted him, accused him of being a supporter of the PRD and threatened to burn his vehicle.



The Army in Sabanilla





The Army in Ocosingo.

#### Thursday, May 9, 1996

The independent organization (not to be confused with the government organization of the same name), *Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo, Independiente y Democrática* (ARIC) said it was in favor of the reconciliation of the communities in the *cañadas* of Ocosingo. These communities live under a very tense situation which has been aggravated by the presence of the Mexican Army.

The Jesuit Order of Mexico advised the office of the Mexican President that the PRI paramilitary group, the *Chinchulines*, continues to sow terror and has created "a virtual state of siege" in the village of Bachajón, in the municipality of Chilón. Two hundred State Public Security agents arrived with eight vehicles full of soldiers, but the situation is far from stable. A Jesuit spokesman stated that this paramilitary group (the *Chinchulines*) has already burned 32 homes in addition to looting the warehouses of the governmental Family Development Program (DIF) and cutting off electricity. He has requested the intervention of the Mexican President.

"Jesuit priests are experiencing first hand, the consequences of the impunity of the armed groups which are aligned with the interests of the *caciques* who have been merciless in their attacks against the mestizo and indigenous people of Chiapas. Their impunity dates back eight years ago to the municipality of Chilón."

#### Friday, May 10, 1996

The Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center stated that violence continues in the *ejido* of Bachajón, municipality of Chilón, despite the presence of the state Public Security Police.

The Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center confirmed that dozens of persons have fled Bachajón for fear of being assassinated and that close to 50 indigenous people whose homes were burned have gone to Tuxtla Gutiérrez to organize a protest in front of the governor's palace. The refugees are demanding compensation for their homes and belongings which were burned by the *Chinchulines*.



The PRI paramilitary groups, *Chinchulines* and *Paz y Justicia*, increased patrolling of the area with more armed groups in the municipalities in the northern part of the state, mainly in Sabánilla, Tila and Chilón.

**Saturday, May 11, 1996**

State Attorney General, Enrique Hernández, said that the statements of the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center were "irresponsible and rash." The statements were related to the discovery of five bodies and yet another burnt house. Hernández said that these statements only confuse and hamper the investigations of the conflict between the PRI paramilitary group, the *Chinchulines*, and sympathizers of the Party of the Democratic Revolution.

**Monday, May 13, 1996**

"Where is the government of the state of Chiapas?" questioned Mario Lopez, Provincial General of the Jesuits in Mexico. "There doesn't seem to be any government and when the Public Security Force appears, it is on the side of the aggressors, protecting the *Chinchulines*." In the last few days, the Jesuit community in Mexico has been full of "tension, worry and indignation." The *Chinchulines* attacked and partially burned their house and church in their mission in Bachajón.

**Tuesday, May 14, 1996**

Due to threats from the PRI group, the *Frente Cívico Luis Donaldo Colosio* (another name for the *Chinchulines*), hundreds of Indigenous people from the town of Bachajón abandoned their lands and belongings, seeking refuge in four other municipalities of Chiapas.

The head of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Gonzalo Ituarte, stated that there has not been an increase in the number of soldiers, it is just "that they are more visible.... Certainly the conduct of the Army is provoking more tension and irritation. It is a pity, because historically, the Federal Army has had popular support and nationalist roots."

General Mario Renán Castillo, commander of the

VII Military Region, denied that the Federal Army is mobilizing itself to pursue the Zapatistas and said that troops were in El Bosque because they found and destroyed a marijuana field.

**Wednesday, May 15, 1996**

The *Chinchulines* and their sympathizers walked five kilometers carrying four cement crosses with the names of their dead and 15 banners demanding the punishment and expulsion of the priests. In the local cemetery they pledged to fight against the rule of the PRD in the municipality of Chilón.

Accompanied by Public Security Police, the *Chinchulines* went to the homes of people they consider their opponents and looted them. They did the same to opponents' stores. The *Chinchulines* have stolen their corn and bean crops and killed their animals to feed the police. They have threatened entire communities and told people to leave their lands. If the residents do not do this, the *Chinchulines* have said that they will burn their buildings.

Delegates from the Indigenous Forum in Mexico stated that Mexican Army troops began to patrol Tabasco territory especially on the border with Chiapas.

**Thursday, May 16, 1996**

Representatives of 130 refugees, assaulted by the *Chinchulines*, have appealed to Bishop Samuel Ruiz, president of the National Mediation Commission, (the liaison between state and federal governments), the EZLN and Commission for Agreement and Pacification (COCOPA), because "he knows how we really live."

*La Coordinadora Indígena de la Sierra del Sur (CISS)* denounced that alleged Central American mercenaries armed with assault type rifles and hired by coffee *caciques*, were marching through the municipalities of Angel Albino Corzo, Motozintla and the highland region of Esquintla, frightening peasants and threatening them with death if they continue with their agrarian struggle.

**Friday, May 17, 1996**

Representatives of the 150 Tzeltal indigenous residents from Bachajón who are presently living as



refugees in Tuxtla Gutiérrez stated that, "We will not return until we have a place to live and until the *Chinchulines* are disarmed and jailed for the crimes which they have committed against us over many years."

After visiting Bachajón, Bishop Samuel Ruiz stated that conditions are still not safe for the return of those who fled the community.

#### **Saturday, May 18, 1996**

The President of the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), Jorge Madrazo, requested that the governor of Chiapas, Ruiz Ferro, enact five precautionary measures which would allow the Commission to investigate the violent acts which occurred in Bachajón. Madrazo stated that these measures should contribute to the investigation of the murders of six people as well as "other crimes, such as threats and intimidations from the *Chinchulines* who keep the community in a virtual state of siege, supported by members of the state police."

#### **Sunday, May 19, 1996**

The *Frente Cívico Luis Donaldo Colosio*, the *Chinchulines*, is protected by three organizations of the PRI, supported by two PRI legislators (state and federal) and aided and abetted by the government of Chiapas. Bachajón has been their political and economic jackpot for the last eight years. Since 1988, they have taken over a sand and gravel pit, monopolized local transportation concessions and, together with the other paramilitary group in the region, *Paz y Justicia*, they control the majority of the transportation in the northern region of Chiapas.

According to studies by human rights organizations and Indigenous refugees in the state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the *Confederación Regional Obrera y Campesina (CROC)*, the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM)* and the *Frente Cívico Luis Donaldo Colosio* (a regional version of the PRI's *Frente Juvenil Revolucionario*), are the political fronts which the *Chinchulines* use to obtain political space and control the region's transportation concessions.

#### **Monday, May 20, 1996**

The Federal Army installed four camps around "Aguascalientes II" in Oventic, "as part of their fight against narcotrafficking." The military presence was considered by the EZLN to be an act of provocation and hence they declared a state of "maximum alert." They requested that the CONAI and the COCOPA "do something to stop military coercion" in this area of Zapatista communities.

In Tuxtla Gutiérrez, a group of alleged Federal Judicial Police shot and killed three people and wounded three others. One of the latter was apparently a bodyguard of the governor.

#### **Tuesday, May 21, 1996**

The commander of the VII Military Region, General Mario Renán Castillo, stated that he was confident that the next round of talks would begin in San Andrés Larráinzar and rejected the EZLN's accusation that the Federal Army is preparing a military offensive.

Two Indigenous people were killed in a confrontation over agrarian problems in the municipality of Chenalhó.

The chronic seasonal shortage of corn and beans is aggravated by a twofold situation. On one hand, there are production factors and natural disasters. On the other hand the "low intensity war" has made this problem into another weapon.

#### **Wednesday, May 22, 1996**

Hundreds of Indigenous people from 12 independent organizations took over the state radio station in Ocosingo for two hours and installed roadblocks at four points along the highway in the northern zone, demanding the detention and punishment of the leaders of the *Chinchulines*.

#### **Thursday, May 23, 1996**

The EZLN insisted that military mobilization in the jungle, the highlands and the northern zone of Chiapas "has greatly increased in the past few days and has been particularly severe in the past 24 hours."



The Indigenous refugees in Tuxtla Gutiérrez asked the state government to reestablish constitutional guarantees in Bachajón and demanded the disarmament and immediate detention of the members of the *Frente Cívico Luis Donaldo Colosio*, better known as the *Chinchulines*.

Organizations such as the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center and the Indigenous Rights Center accused the PRI delegate of the VII state district, Samuel Sánchez Sánchez and the federal PRI representative of the VI electoral district (who also happens to be the former president of the *Unión Nacional de Productores de Café*) Rafael Ceballos Cancino, of being the politicians who have supported the *Chinchulines*. This support has been given in the form of loans, political opportunities and negotiated agreements with state authorities.

*Saturday, May 25, 1996*

According to the Jesuits, the Sisters of the Divine Shepherd, the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity and the Miguel Agustín Pro Human Rights

Center, "There is a low intensity war against the Indigenous people in Bachajón, carried out by armed groups such as the *Chinchulines*. This is another part of the persecution of Jesuit priests, of ungovernability reflected in uncontrollable violence and a climate which is unfavorable for peace in the state."

Representatives of indigenous refugees in Tuxtla Gutiérrez held a demonstration in front of the government palace and the State Congress to demand the release of 28 members of their organization and asked that the interim governor, Julio Ruiz Ferro, keep his word and incarcerate the leaders of the *Chinchulines*.

Members of the paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*, "ambushed and killed" two Indigenous peasant members of the PRD in the community of Usipá, municipality of Tila.

*Sunday, May 26, 1996*

Heriberto Cruz, parish priest of Tila, denounced that the paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*, continues to



The Army in Bachajón, Chiapas



kidnap and assassinate their opponents. He also stated that the presence of the Federal Army has increased in the last eight months and that police and soldiers have occupied the churches in this region as well as other buildings in the community.

*Monday, May 27, 1996*

CONPAZ requested that the authorities take the appropriate measures to disband the paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*, which operates in the state's northern zone and which, two days ago, "ambushed and killed" two Indigenous PRD members in the community of Usipá, in the municipality of Tila.

*Tuesday, May 28, 1996*

The organizations who form the Indigenous Forum of Oaxaca held a protest to demand the immediate withdrawal of the Federal Army from Chiapas and other indigenous zones, and for an immediate end

to the "constant harassment suffered by the Zapatista communities."

There was a confrontation between peasants in the community of Unión Buenavista in the municipality of Chicomuselo. The state government announced that two people were killed and the elected government delegate for the region stated that four people had died. The Assistant Secretary of Government stated that six people had been killed.

*Wednesday, May 29, 1996*

The Coordinating Group of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ) proposed the creation of a delegation of intellectuals, religious leaders, academics, political and social leaders, artists and businesspeople (one hundred persons) which would leave on June 2 to visit different regions of the state to witness prevailing conditions of militarization. They have been asked to observe and



The Army in Sabanilla



propose ways of establishing the "minimal conditions necessary for dialogue."

**Thursday, May 30, 1996**

The Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee (the CCRI of the EZLN) stated, from the highlands of Chiapas, that the tension in the area has grown. Increased mobilization of soldiers and state and federal police is posing a "threat of war."

The Committee reiterated that "there are no conditions for returning to the negotiating table" and advised that they cannot return to the dialogue under pressure, conditions and threats.

**Friday, May 31, 1996**

According to CONPAZ, inhabitants of the community of Usipá, municipality of Tila, have fled to the mountains and to the municipal seat of Salto de Agua for fear of being "attacked once again" by the paramilitary group, *Paz y Justicia*.

**Saturday, June 1, 1996**

The Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center stated that government authorities committed a number of violations in Bachajón and are concerned that the "official double talk, which shifts between a commitment to justice and complicity with the criminals, will further strengthen the impunity and violence of the *Chinchulines*."

The commander of the VII Military Region, General Mario Renán Castillo, stated that the Federal Army will leave the conflict area when the EZLN lay down their arms and join the political life of the country.

**Tuesday, June 4, 1996**

After carrying out observations in different regions of the conflict zone, civilian observers summoned by CONPAZ demanded that solutions for reconciliation "come from the very communities affected by the conflict in Chiapas." They requested the withdrawal of the Federal Army from the communities, the disarmament and disbanding of the *guardias blancas* and paramilitary groups such as the *Chinchulines* and

*Paz y Justicia*. They also asked that humanitarian aid and public resources destined for the municipalities be distributed to all the communities without any restrictions through civilian and not military means.

**Wednesday, June 5, 1996**

The PRD parliamentary group and leaders of AEDEPCH denounced that there is an increase in the militarization of Chiapas and they demanded that the federal government not spend one more peso in the purchase of war materials.

**Thursday, June 6, 1996**

Promoters of the Zapatista National Liberation Front (EZLN) located in Chicago, U.S.A., held a meeting in front of the Mexican consulate to protest the climate of war in Chiapas which is supported by the Mexican government.

**Friday, June 14, 1996**

Hundreds of PRD members, along with sectors of the PRI and EZLN sympathizers agreed to expel members of the *Chinchulines* from the municipality of Bachajón due to "the negligence of the state authorities."

**Saturday, June 15, 1996**

PRD supporter, Tiburcio Ruiz, was assassinated in the community of El Vergel in the municipality of Simojovel. In response, PRD members kidnaped two members of the Labor Party (PT-Partido del Trabajo) whom they accuse of being responsible for the murder.

A confrontation between PRD and PRI supporters in the community of Los Moyos in the municipality of Sabanilla left at least two dead and three wounded. For five months, the majority of the communities in this municipality, which are active PRD supporters and EZLN sympathizers, have mobilized to demand the removal of the PRI mayor, Benedicto Perez.

**Sunday, June 16, 1996**

The *Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas (UNORCA)* is demanding



the immediate withdrawal of the Federal Army from the jungle of Chiapas and the expulsion of the *Chinchulines* from San Jerónimo Bachajón.

General Mario Renán Castillo, commander of the VII Military Region, declared that Subcomandante Marcos' recognition that the armed forces facilitated conditions for a meeting with the COCOPA, "reduces the possibility for armed confrontation." "This statement ratifies the fact that we are complying with the laws and that our actions never go against pacification."

#### **Tuesday, June 18, 1996**

One person was killed, another four were wounded and two were kidnaped as a result of three separate actions apparently perpetrated by members of *Paz y Justicia* who remain in the community of Corzal Nuevo. This group, located in the municipality of Tila, and the *Chinchulines*, located in the municipality of Chilón, have been known to the public since 1994. However, their greatest growth occurred in March 1995. This was one month after the Federal Army was authorized to advance into communities under EZLN influence.

#### **Wednesday, June 19, 1996**

Representatives of Amnesty International wrapped up a four day visit to Chiapas to observe the human rights situation. The delegation, headed by Morris Tidball Bilz, was "very concerned" about human rights in the state, particularly in relation to armed groups which "have unleashed violence in the northern zone" of Chiapas.

Eleuterio and Laurio Gutiérrez Sánchez, Indigenous members of the Labor Party (PT), were assassinated and four others were wounded in the *ejido* of El Vergel in the municipality of Simojovel. These six people were assassinated over the last five days. They were indigenous members of the PRI, PRD and PT, and were assassinated with high caliber weapons in the municipalities of Sabanilla, Tila and Simojovel.

#### **Thursday, June 20, 1996**

The fourth massacre in the past few days occurred in the municipality of Tila with the assassination of three family members, allegedly for political reasons.

#### **Friday, June 21, 1996**

Two people were killed in an armed confrontation in the community of Jesús Carranza, in the municipality of Sabanilla.

According to official records, at least 31 people have been killed in the first six months of the year in confrontations, forced evictions and ambushes. Since the second period of interim governor Julio César Ruiz Ferro began, eleven bloody conflicts have been reported. Indigenous persons and peasants from at least nine municipalities have lost their lives.

#### **Saturday, June 22, 1996**

Subcomandante Marcos has assured the COCOPA that it is absolutely necessary to put an end to the violent situation which arises each time there are negotiations between the EZLN and the government delegation. "The *guardias blancas* have a schedule of action: they quiet down when there is no dialogue."

The seventh violent event registered in eight days was reported in the *ejido* El Guanál in the municipality of Tila resulting in the death of three people, apparently PRI members. According to official data, 34 people have lost their lives in violent acts during the first six months of this year.

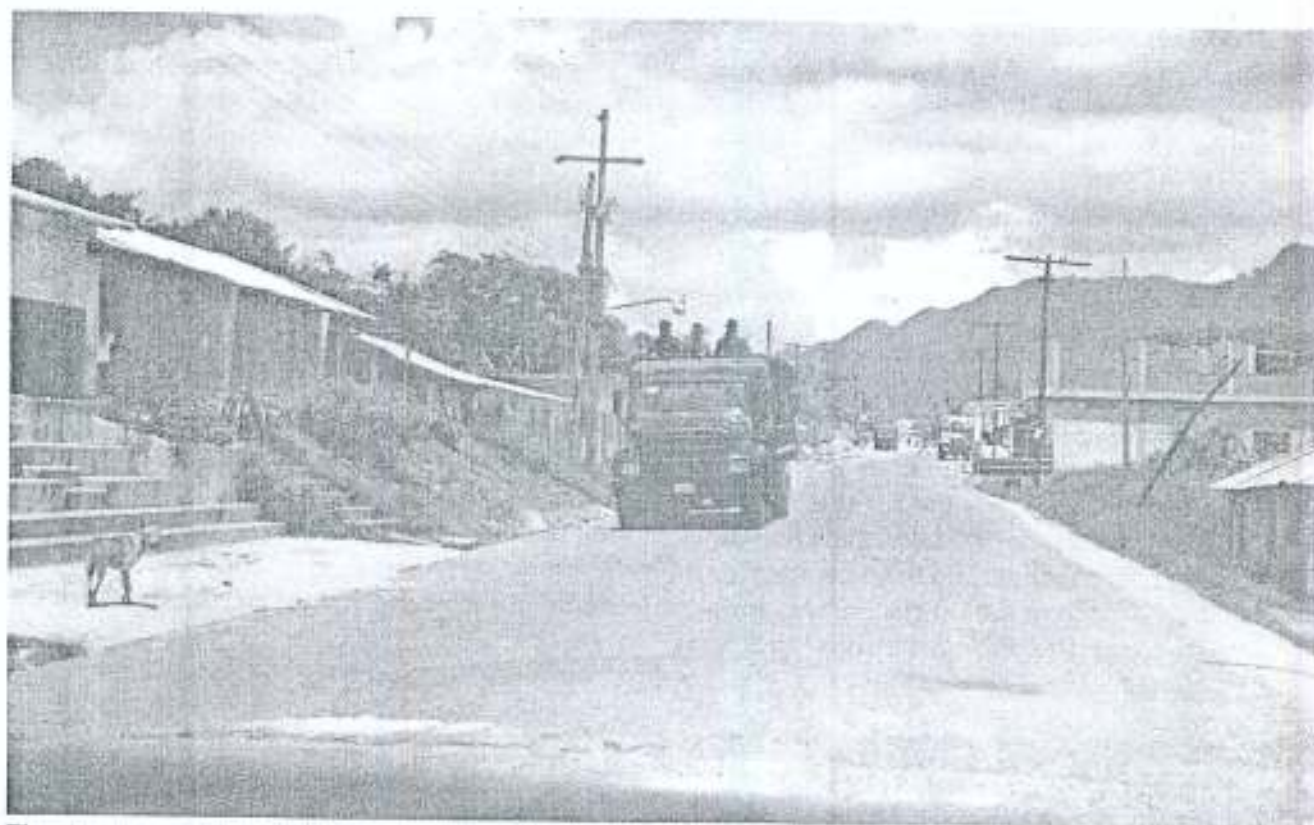
Indigenous PRI school teachers who have closed their schools for fear of reprisals and indigenous leaders of the official organization stated that the leaders of the PRI affiliated group, *Paz y Justicia*, (accused of provoking confrontations and forcing indigenous people to abandon their communities), have accused the priests and the traditional leaders of the Catholic Church of being the ones responsible for the confrontations and ambushes.

#### **Sunday, June 23, 1996**

The Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas warned that if the government does not stop the actions of paramilitary groups in the northern zone of Chiapas, the state "will be submerged in a fratricidal war of grave consequences."

Inhabitants of Tila, where *Paz y Justicia* operates, reported that dozens of families have fled to the





The Army in Bachajón, Chilón

mountains in the past few days for fear of being assassinated. They denounced that the Public Security Police broke into homes and kidnaped and raped three 18 year old women in the community of Joshnité. Members of the *Chinchulines* participated in this action together with *Paz y Justicia*.

Subcomandante Marcos stated that the EZLN had no part in the violent acts which cost the lives of 12 indigenous members of the PRI, PRD and PT. He indicated that these events, "strangely coincided" with the visit of Jorge del Valle to Chiapas. Del Valle, a member of the governmental delegation, held a private meeting with the Secretary of Government, Eraclio Zepeda. Marcos stated that the bloody events in Sabanilla, Tila and Simojovel have been perpetrated to "destabilize and provoke clashes among the people. They are also meant to damage the image of those who are working for progress in the peace process." This includes the CONAI (by attacking the Diocese of Bishop Samuel Ruiz) and the EZLN, through the "use of ski masks and bandanas."

PRI and PT members blamed the previous crimes on the catechists and priests of the Diocese of San

Cristobal de Las Casas, and on "the organization," the name for the EZLN in the jungle and the northern region of the state.

#### *Monday, June 24, 1996*

Thousands of Indigenous people and peasants from the northern zone of Chiapas staged marches, protests and put up roadblocks at several points throughout the region to demand an end to the violence which, in the last ten days, has resulted in 14 dead and 20 wounded in Tila, Sabanilla and Simojovel.

#### *Tuesday, June 25, 1996*

Chol leaders demanded that federal and state authorities put an end to the violence against the people, while stating that the paramilitary groups, *Paz y Justicia* and the *Chinchulines*, have "spread terror" and have been hunting down those who do not belong to their political party, the PRI.

The Coadjutor Bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Raúl Vera, stated that, "If these groups continue to



be aided and abetted, there will be civil war, or uncontrollable situations. The thing that most struck me was the fact that these armed groups, which are no myth and are very well-defined groups, have the freedom to organize themselves and to work in broad daylight."

*Wednesday, June 26, 1996*

Bishop Samuel Ruiz declared that the growing violence in the northern zone of Chiapas is the beginning of a war which "threatens to be a war of fratricide and extermination." It is clear that there are "actors who have the specific function of instigating conflicts." He stated that, primarily in Tila, Tumbalá, Sabanilla and Salto de Agua, one can see a "plan where the official party is armed in almost all of the municipalities and has

intervened in order to attack civilian society." He speculated that this problem "was intentionally created to make it look as though it is the communities alone who are involved in these confrontations, and that there are no outsiders provoking these conflicts. The saviour Federal Army will then be needed to impose law and order in this territory, and no one should protest, on a national or international level since we have a clear interpretation of the facts as they are."

Governor Julio César Ruiz Ferro promised that he would provide the conditions for the immediate return of displaced families from the 28 *ejidos* which form the municipality of Tila. He guaranteed them safe conditions. Social assistance and that any persons committing illegal actions would be prosecuted.



A demand posted in Chilón: Drugs and soldiers, NO. Corn and beans, YES. [The growing, trafficking, possession and use of drugs are prohibited. Anyone caught doing this will be expelled from the communities. For the indigenous communities: Drugs and soldiers, NO. Corn and beans, YES.]



*Friday, June 28, 1996*

Six thousand cadets from military training sites throughout the country will participate in social service activities in the highlands and jungle zones of Chiapas from July 1 to 15.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Gobernación*) indicated that there are forces interested in

creating a climate of destabilization and an environment adverse to dialogue between the EZLN and the government. In Chiapas, Assistant Secretary Arturo Núñez stated that the situation is very complex because many actors are involved. They include members of the different political parties and radical groups... and obviously catechists and priests.



Soldiers between La Soledad and La Sultana



Military camp in La Soledad



Military camp in La Soledad



## **Chapter V**

### **Facts about Chiapas**

---

# Facts about Chiapas <sup>1</sup>

## General Information

<b>Location:</b>	Southeastern Mexico
<b>Population:</b>	3,210,496 inhabitants
<b>Population distribution:</b>	16,442 settlements of which three-quarters have a maximum of 99 inhabitants. In 12,110 communities, the number of inhabitants is less than 100. There are 120 urban communities and 16,302 rural communities.
<b>Land area:</b>	75,634.4 km <sup>2</sup> (49,918.7 square miles)
<b>Marginalization of the State:</b>	The state ranks first of the six states with the highest degree of marginalization.
<b>Municipalities:</b>	111 municipalities; 16 border with Guatemala.
<b>Marginalization at the Municipal Level:</b>	Five municipalities have a low level of marginalization; 12, a medium level of marginalization; 56 are highly marginalized and 38 are very highly marginalized. None have very low levels of marginalization. This means that 94 of the 111 municipalities have high or very high levels of marginalization.
<b>Languages:</b>	36% of the inhabitants speak Tzeltal, 32% speak Tzotzil, 16% speak Chol, 5% speak Tojolabal and 4.9 % speak Zoque. Also, some inhabitants speak Lacandón Maya and a few speak Cakchiquel.

## Economy

**Gross Domestic Product:** In the last decade the Gross Domestic Product per person in the state decreased on an average of 6.5% annually. This is the most drastic fall registered on a state level. It is even higher than the 0.3% decline felt on a national level. This negative tendency has continued since 1970, making Chiapas the most marginalized and backward state in the country. Forty-five percent of the GDP is produced by agriculture and the livestock industry.

**Economically Active Population:** The Economically Active Population is 42.9% of the population that is 12 years of age or older. Men form 74.5% of the EAP. The economically inactive population is 55.4% of the population that is 12 years of age or older. In 1990, only 11.1% of the Economically Active Population was in the industrial sector while 58.3% belonged to the agricultural sector and livestock industry and 8.8% were artisans or laborers. Merchants and clerks formed 5.2% of the EAP and 4.3% were office workers.

**Salaries:** Of a total of 854,159 people that form the EAP, 59% receive minimum wage or less (at the national level the figure is 26.5%, putting Chiapas among the poorest states in the country); 21% receive two minimum wages or less and 18% earn between two and ten times the minimum wage. The percentage of the labor force that receives more than ten times the minimum salary is only 1.3%.

In 1990, 38.8% of the agricultural population of Chiapas received an income of less than one half

---

<sup>1</sup> This information is taken from *Chiapas en Cifras*, edited by *Espacio Civil por la Paz* (ESPAZ), May 1995.





Military camp in La Soledad.

the minimum wage. In the same year, 36.6% of the population received more than half the minimum wage but still less than one minimum wage. At present exchange rates, this equals between \$1.74 to \$3.48 dollars.

In Chiapas, the minimum wage in June 1994 was N\$ 11.96 (new pesos) per day which is less than \$4.00 dollars a day at the current exchange rate.

## Economic Regions of Chiapas

**Central Region:** The state capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez is located here as well as a number of hydroelectric dams such as La Angostura, Chicoasén, and Malpaso. This is an area of cattle and corn production and includes the municipalities of Chiapa de Corzo, Ocozocoautla, Berriozábal.

**Highlands:** San Cristóbal de las Casas is located in this region. The main economic activities here consist of handicrafts, sheep

raising, cultivation of fruits, vegetables and flowers, and the sale of coal. This region has the highest levels of marginalization.

**Border Zone:** This region is located in the eastern part of the state, which includes the municipalities of Comitán, La Trinitaria and extends to the border of the municipality of Frontera Comalapa. This area produces corn, beans, watermelon and cantaloupe, and cattle.

**Fraylesca Region:** Located in the middle part of the state, this region has a warm climate and produces corn and cattle. This zone has mountains, low-level jungles, and forests along small rivers. The ecological reserve "El Triunfo" is also located here.

**Northern Zone:** This area includes the petrochemical region of La Reforma and borders with the state of Tabasco. It produces bananas, cacao and cattle. This region has municipalities inhabited by the Zoque Indigenous people. The



hydroelectric dams, Peñitas and Itzantún, are located in the municipality of Simojovel.

**Jungle:** This region includes the municipalities of Ocosingo, Palenque, Salto de Agua, and the Lacandón Jungle which borders with Guatemala. The economic activities in this area include cattle ranching and the production of precious woods. There are eight oil sites in this region. This area also encompasses highly visited tourist attractions such as Palenque, Agua Azul, and the ruins of Toniná.

**Sierra:** This region extends from the county of Amatenango along the border and includes the municipalities of La Grandeza, Siltepec and four other municipalities with elevations ranging from 2,000 to 2,800 meters above sea level. Coffee along with other types of fruits and vegetables are grown here.

**Soconusco:** This region has 16 municipalities, the majority of which border with Guatemala. This area produces coffee, bananas, cantaloupe, African palm, tobacco, sugar, soybeans and sorghum. Puerto Madero, an important port for most exports, is also located in this region.

**Isthmus-Coast:** This area includes the municipalities where fishing is the main industry from Mapastepec to Arriaga. This region also produces mangos, watermelon, cantaloupe and cattle.

**Land Tenure:** In Chiapas, 78% of state *ejido* lands have not been divided into parcels. In 1992, Chiapas had the highest number of pending agricultural legal settlements (25% of the national total).

Twenty families monopolize the best lands in the state. For 12 years, 1,032,000 Indigenous persons have owned 823,000 hectares of land which is less than one hectare per person. At the same time, one family owned 121,000 hectares.

At present, some 6,000 cattle ranching families hold more than three million hectares, which is almost one half the area of the state. The social ownership

sector, also holds a little over three million hectares and includes almost 200,000 *ejido* and communal land owners.

Of all available land, 76.9% is private property and covers 34.6% of state's total area (the best land); 11.7% of available land has *ejido* ownership and covers 39.3% of the total state area. In Ocosingo, for example, there are pieces of land with 1,500 hectares; 3,000 hectares; 48,464 hectares; and 121,611 hectares.

Chiapas follows Veracruz and Michoacan as the state with the greatest number of *ejidos* and agrarian communities (1,714) covering 41.4% of total state area. This represents 3,130,892 hectares of which 1,278,147 hectares are used for agriculture.

With 193,515 *ejido* and communal land owners, Chiapas ranks fourth in the social ownership sector (the first three are Oaxaca, Veracruz and the State of Mexico).

The average size of *ejido* or communal land parcels is six and a half hectares per person (the national average is seven hectares).

The Lacandón jungle has the greatest number of *ejidos* (377), the largest *ejido* area (1,839,920 hectares) and the largest *ejido* population (40,902 persons).

On a national level there are a little more than five hectares of non-irrigated land for each irrigated hectare. In Chiapas, the ratio is 14 non-irrigated hectares for each irrigated hectare.

In some regions of the state, including the highlands, the production of one ton of corn requires 300 work days. On a national level, the average is 17.84 workdays per ton of corn and in the U.S., it is 0.14 work days per ton of corn.

**Elections:** In 1988, Chiapas won the world championship for "voting speed." In Pichucalco, one voting booth recorded 3,535 votes for the official party (the PRI); this was one vote every ten seconds.

Ten of the 19 municipalities which form the IX District had election results with 100% of the votes for only one party, the PRI. Altamirano was one of these municipalities.



In 1991, the PRI won the elections in all but one of the 112 municipalities as well as all of the relative majority seats in congress. According to the official results, in 50 municipalities they received 100% of the votes and in 20 more they had at least 80% of the votes.

In summary, the PRI won 97.7% of state votes in 1976, 90.2% in 1982, 89.9% in 1988, 76.2% in 1991 ... and an armed rebellion in 1994.

## Human Rights

During the six year administration of Absalón Castellanos, there were 153 political assassinations, 692 incarcerations, 503 kidnappings with torture, 327 peasants "disappeared," 407 families expelled from their communities, 54 forced evictions from settlements, 12 women raped and 29 attacks against protesters during marches.

In 1992 alone, during governor Patrocinio González Garrido's administration, there were 49 cases of torture, three arbitrary executions, 128 illegal incarcerations, 17 attacks against groups. In Palenque and Tenejapa, 130 persons were illegally detained. According to the CNDH (National Commission on Human Rights), Chiapas ranked second in the country in the number of human rights violations during Gonzalez Garrido's term as governor. In 1989, 539 Indigenous persons were incarcerated, 679 in 1990, 546 in 1991 and 251 in 1992.

During Elmer Setzer's interim administration, there were 2,290 indigenous prisoners and 914 were released during the same period.

## Demographics

From 1980 to 1990, the annual average population growth in Chiapas was 4.51 % (2% was the national average). The highest index occurred in the municipality of La Reforma at 9.1%, more than twice the country's total rate ( 2. 02%).

If the growth rate registered in 1990 remains constant, it is estimated that in the year 2000, there will be almost five million people in Chiapas. In 16 years, the population will have doubled. Chiapas is the state with the youngest population, since 55.6%

of the population is between one and nineteen years of age.

## Education

In 1990, there were 627,138 children between five and fourteen years of age attending school. At the same time, 930,769 children in the same age group did not attend school. This means that 59.7% of school age children had no access to education.

Of the total state population over 12 years of age (2.03 million), that should have completed its elementary school studies, only 446,000 had graduated and continued with secondary school education. Only 199,000 persons had high school studies; 57,245 had college level studies and only 5,052 had graduate level studies.

Only 1.12% of the economically active population is professionally trained.

In elementary school, the grade point average is 43.94 on a scale of 100. In high school the grade point average is 46.71. On university entrance exams, the general grade point average is 44.69.

The illiteracy rate in Chiapas for people 15 years of age and older is three times the national average (30.12 % compared to 12.44%.) Chiapas has twice the national ratio of those in the same age group who have not finished primary school (62.08% versus 29.31%). Illiteracy is greater among women (37.5%) than among men (22.4%).

In the municipality of Altamirano, 64.11% of women 15 years of age and older are illiterate. The illiteracy rate for the same group in the municipalities of Las Margaritas is 59.5%; in Ocosingo, 60.5%; and San Cristobal, 32.3%

Slightly more than half of the inhabitants of Altamirano who are 15 years of age and older do not know how to read or write. In Las Margaritas, the same is true for 48 of every 100 inhabitants and for almost 47% of those who live in Ocosingo. In San Cristobal, the rate is 25%, which is one of every four inhabitants (15 years of age or older).



## Housing

There are 594,025 households registered in the state with an average of six persons per household. Of these homes, 19.4% have only one room which is used as a kitchen and a bedroom at the same time. Wood or coal is used in the kitchen of 361,754 houses. Another 38.6% of the homes have two rooms, one which is used as a kitchen and the other as a bedroom. The remaining 52% have three rooms or more. Of these households, an average of 300,000 (48.7%) have dirt floors and 321,090 are built from simple materials. The remaining homes are made of more resistant materials such as corrugated roofing material, asbestos, etc.

In Altamirano, 93% of the homes use firewood for cooking; 64.3% do not have running water and 74.2% lack electricity. In Las Margaritas, 92.1% of the homes use firewood for cooking, 76.9% lack running water and 67.1% lack electricity. In Ocosingo, firewood is used for cooking in 89.4% of the homes, 57.4% lack water and 67.9% lack electricity. In San Cristobal, the proportions are 40.3%, 31.3% and 17.3%.

In Mexico, 21.47% of its inhabitants live in homes without plumbing. In Chiapas, the rate is 42.66%. In Chiapas, 34.92% of the people lack electricity compared to the national level of 12.99%.

## Health

Some sources state that there is one doctor for every 3,500 inhabitants, one nurse for every 1,315 inhabitants and a hospital bed for every 1,400 inhabitants. Others sources say there is one doctor for every 1,500 inhabitants and that less than one fifth of the population has access to the social security institutions (health insurance).

## Malnutrition

The number of deaths due to nutritional deficiencies grew in the last decade by 6.41% and 33% of the population is severely undernourished. The number of deaths from nutritional deficiencies is 22.3 for every 100,000 persons. The national rate is 10.5 deaths per 100,000 persons.



Soldiers between La Soledad and La Sultana.



In Chiapas, 66.74% of the population suffers from malnutrition. Oaxaca follows with 66.67%, Guerrero with 64.65%, Quintana Roo with 64.12%, Campeche with 63.12% and Yucatan with 62.48%.

In the state's rural areas and in other south-eastern states, the daily minimum food intake (protein and calories) is not covered.

In Chiapas, chronic malnutrition is found in 88.6% of the children. Of a total of 287 critical cases, 80% are found in five states: Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Veracruz and Puebla.

In 1992, data from Indigenous shelters in Chiapas reported the following:

Out of 1,112 boys, 638 had chronic, 50 serious and 43 severe malnutrition. Only 381 boys had a normal nutritional level. Out of 1714 girls, 376 had chronic, 18 serious and 19 severe malnutrition. Only 189 girls had a normal nutritional level.

Chiapas and Oaxaca have the most severe statistics with respect to infant malnutrition. In 1990, 20,000 of these children are expected to die from preventable illnesses, another 100,000 will suffer malnutrition and 115,000 will drop out of elementary school. The exploitation and mistreatment of millions of children continues.

Fifty-one percent of the more than 2,800,000 indigenous persons under 17 years of age suffer from first degree malnutrition, mainly in the highlands of Chiapas and the Cañada Mixteca in Oaxaca.

## Mortality

In Chiapas, life expectancy is considerably lower than the national average; 66.4 years of age against 69.7 in Chiapas.

For every 100,000 inhabitants in the state, there are 152.2 deaths due to intestinal infections/illnesses as compared to 38 deaths on average in the nation. There are 25.5 deaths due to pneumonia and influenza in Chiapas as compared to 16.5 deaths at the national level.

In 1992, the 25 main causes of illness in the state (according to their occurrence per 100,000 inhabitants) showed that the majority of illnesses are

related to marginalization. For every 100,000 births, 117 women die. Chiapas is the state with the third highest rate of this type of mortality.

Over 12% of the deaths due to illness occur in the Indigenous regions of the country where more than eight million Mexicans live. The three states where the most people die due to the previously mentioned causes are Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas.

There are two major causes of death: tuberculosis, which occupies fourth and fifth place as the cause of death at the state and regional level, and malnutrition which is shown to be an important cause of death at the regional level. Both of these causes of death are related to marginalization.

Chiapas reports the highest number of deaths due to tuberculosis in the nation. In 1992, 3,000 people contracted malaria. Recently, 71 cases have been recorded of children born without brains (anencephaly) in seven municipalities.

Chiapas has the highest number of reported cases of cholera. Deaths related to childbearing are estimated to be more than double the national average.

Chiapas, Oaxaca, Puebla, Durango, Guerrero and San Luis Potosi have average infant mortality rates among the Indigenous population between 55 and 65 deaths for every 1,000 births. The national average is 34.8 for every 1,000 births.

In 1992, in the eight health districts of Chiapas, the general mortality rate per 100,000 inhabitants related to nutritional deficiencies, anemia, intestinal infections, stomach tumors, perinatal problems, lung tuberculosis, acute respiratory infections, etc. was higher than the national level.

Chiapas ranks first in mortality rates, with 13,500 deaths per year.

Only one of every 100 deaths occurring in the municipality of Chamula were included in the official statistics for 1991. In the same year, 97.8% of death certificates were not signed by a doctor, and the majority of the causes for death were unspecified.

The main causes of death for those older than 15 years of age are inflammation, fever, diarrhea and alcoholic congestion.



## Oil

In the beginning of 1995, there were 86 oil wells in Chiapas, located in the municipalities of Estación Juárez, Reforma, Ostuacan, Pichucalco and Ocosingo. They produced a total of 69,888 barrels of oil per day. Annually, 25,511,000 barrels of crude oil were produced. In other words, 21% of the national oil production comes from the mesozoic zone in Chiapas and Tabasco and 47% of the total national production of natural gas comes from the same region.

## Electricity

Chiapas generates more hydroelectric power than any other Mexican state. It contributes 55% of the total production through the plants of Malpaso, La Angostura, Chicoasén and Peñitas. The capacity of these dams is 103,491 million cubic meters, which is 42% of the capacity of the 13 main dams in the country.

More than 30% of the homes in the state lacked electricity in 1990, and in 1982, 95% of the houses in Indigenous communities did not have this service. No other state in Mexico surpasses this record. At the same time, 60% of the households in Chiapas use firewood or coal as their only source of energy.

## Water

Thirty percent of the nation's surface area water is found in Chiapas, though only 56.8% of the state's inhabitants have running water at their disposal. Most of these inhabitants live in the cities. The hydroelectric capacity of Chiapas contrasts greatly to the fact that only 2.96% of the agricultural surface area has irrigation systems. More than 40% of the homes do not have running water and 92% of the homes in Indigenous communities did not have running water in 1982.



Military patrol in La Realidad Trinidad, municipality of Las Margaritas.



---

# GLOSSARY

**CACIQUE:** A person with political or economic influence in a town, neighborhood, state or region. A cacique can portray a double personality. He can be on the one hand despotic, authoritarian and hated and on the other hand loved and even admired.

**COMISION DE CONCORDIA Y PACIFICACIÓN (Cocopa):** Commission of Concord and Pacification): Formed on March 9, 1995, the COCOPA has the objective of collaborating in the mediation process to find a political solution to the conflict in Chiapas. It is integrated by representatives and senators from the following parties:

Partido Acción Nacional (PAN): National Action Party.

Partido del Trabajo (PT): Labor Party.

Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD): Party of the Democratic Revolution.

Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI): Institutional Revolution Party

**COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE INTERMEDIACIÓN (Conai):** National Mediation

Commission: The CONAI was formed in 1994 with representative members of civil society, under the Presidency of the Bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Don Samuel Ruiz García, to help find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Chiapas. After much pressure on the part of civil society the CONAI was recognized by the government as a mediator between the two conflicting sides: the government and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

**COMITÉ CLANDESTINO REVOLUCIONARIO INDÍGENA-COMANDANCIA GENERAL DEL EJÉRCITO ZAPATISTA DE LIBERACIÓN NACIONAL (CCRI-CGEZLN):** Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation: Political-military leadership of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

**EJIDO:** communal land ownership, established by the 1917 Mexican Constitution. The Constitution was modified during the Salinas administration in the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to facilitate the access of national and foreign capital to the land, damaging the interests of ejido owning peasants.

**GUARDIAS BLANCAS:** White Guards: People with military training hired by landowners to protect the landowners and also their holdings against invasions by poor peasants.

**PARAMILITARES:** Paramilitary personnel: Groups with military training, without belonging to the army. They can fight under the orders of whoever pays them best or following their own religious and/or political criteria. In Chiapas, the Chinchulines and Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice) paramilitary groups operate mainly in the northern area of the state.

---

**PARTIDO ACCIÓN NACIONAL (PAN):** National Action Party: Established in 1939. Its original members were mainly middle class Catholics and businessmen who disagreed with the «socialist» policies of president Lázaro Cárdenas, who had nationalized the oil industry in 1938. During the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) the PAN leadership supported the government, in exchange for the recognition of the PAN's electoral victories. Due to these political decisions, a group from its leadership left PAN and formed the Partido del Foro Democrático (Party of the Democratic Forum). PAN is the second electoral force, behind the PRI.

**PARTIDO DE LA REVOLUCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA (PRD):** Established in 1988, with the participation of diverse organizations, parties and social movements from different political and ideological currents. An important sector of this party has its origins in the left and another in the Corriente Democrática (Democratic Current) of the PRI, headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who broke with the official party in 1987. The predecessor of the PRD was the Frente Democrático Nacional (National Democratic Front), which launched Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas as candidate for president in the 1988 elections. One of the largest electoral frauds in memory was committed in these elections won by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who became president of the country for the period 1988-1994.

**PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO INSTITUCIONAL (PRI):** Revolutionary Institutional Party: PRI is a state party, established in 1929 under the name Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), National Revolutionary Party. In the 1934 this party changed its name to Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM), Party of the Mexican Revolution and in 1946 it was renamed Partido Revolucionario Institucional, Revolutionary Institutional Party. It has not lost a single presidential election since it was founded. Since the decade of the thirties to the present, PRI has controlled the official union, agrarian and popular movements. It has also controlled elections and their results always.

**PROCAMPO:** Government program, which according to official statements has as its objective reactivating agriculture, but has been used to manipulate citizen vote.



**Militarization and Violence in Chiapas**

Printed by

*impretel*

Almería No. 17, Col. Postal

C.P. 03410, México, D.F.

Tel: 696 25 03

June, 1997.

---

In response to this political climate plagued with violence, civil society of Chiapas, through the Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ), urgently summoned a diverse and broadbased group of citizens from all sectors and political parties to see if conditions exist for the continuation of the dialogue scheduled for June 5, 1996. Some 40 persons from different parts of the country, from diverse sectors, from different economic conditions and political positions, responded to the call. They went to Chiapas to understand and testify about the conditions which exist in Chiapas for the continuation of the dialogue. Grouped into various observation teams, we traveled several routes to visit the most significant Indigenous communities in Chiapas, as well as places where the national press had recently reported conflicts. The text and graphic material which we present here constitute our testimony regarding the observations which we carried out on our diverse journeys on June 1 through 3, 1996.

We have also included reports regarding the violent situation which prevails in the northern part of the state. These reports were written by national observers on the June 28 and 29. These observers were invited by the Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations "Todos los Derechos para Todos" ("All Rights for All"), in coordination with the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center.

---