

Chronology of Events Since the January 1 Uprising

January 1, 1994. The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) forced its way into Mexico's political and military arena, and focused not just Mexico's, but much of the world's attention on the southern state of Chiapas.

In the early hours of the morning of December 31, the EZLN divided its army into five columns and in a coordinated action took control of all major towns in Chiapas with the exception of the state capital Tuxtla Gutierrez. The EZLN stormed a jail in Altamirano and liberated 160 prisoners, most of whom were Indians accused of illegal land takeovers, cutting trees without permits and other such crimes by local authorities--known regionally as caciques. From a captured radio station in Ocosingo, the EZLN denounced the conflict was caused by governmental repression, corruption and Indigenous peoples' miserable living conditions. From the balcony of the municipal building in San Cristobal de las Casas the Zapatistas read their now famous declaration of war.

January 2. The EZLN retreated from San Cristobal--the second largest city in Chiapas. They also overran a major military base in the state and carried off tons of explosives and ammunition. The administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari denounced the Zapatistas as foreigners and outlaws.

January 3. The Mexican army counterattacked by land and air. Eight thousand soldiers were deployed in the first few days while the air force bombed presumed Zapatista positions, several Indigenous villages, and even a group of Tzeltal girls and a press vehicle.

January 4. The EZLN abandoned the highland towns, retreating to bases in the Lacandon forest. SAIIC received a call from Indigenous activists in San Cristobal with the news that the air force was bombing Indian communities, as well as kidnapping and killing civilians accused of supporting the Zapatistas. The SAIIC office launched a campaign to denounce these human rights violations and apply pressure on the Mexican regime. Human rights organizations all over the world began efforts to halt the repression.

The Coordinating Commission of Indigenous Nations and Organizations of the Continent (CONIC) through the coordinating office in Panama broadcast these events throughout the continent and decided to send delegates to Chiapas in solidarity with the Indian population.

January 6. The military sealed off the town of San Cristobal de las Casas and all the other zones of conflict, preventing movement of journalists, human rights monitors and local civilians alike.

January 8. Reacting to international outcry against the army repression in Chiapas, President Salinas proposed a cease fire, peace negotiations and a (conditional) general amnesty for those involved in the conflict. The EZLN remained in control of a swath of territory

encompassing the fringe of the highlands and much of the Lacandon forest.

January 13. The government and EZLN agreed to a cease-fire. Following the cease fire, the government's death toll counted 35 soldiers and 75 Zapatistas. Independent sources put the number at well over 200. Over 20,000 people mostly Tojolabal and Tzeltal Indians have also fled their villages and are living in makeshift refugee camps in San Cristobal and other towns.

January 11-14. Indian and campesino organizations in Chiapas carried out an unprecedented mobilization in San Cristobal. Five hundred and twenty delegates from 280 Indigenous and campesino organizations in the state of Chiapas met to propose resolutions to the conflict. The delegates called for an end to human rights abuses, a total cease fire, recognition of the EZLN as a belligerent party and negotiations to resolve the conflict. They then voted to form a State Council of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations of Chiapas (CEOIC).

January 16-22. The State Council met for the first time to try and further develop their proposals for Chiapas. CONIC delegates from North, South and Central America participated as invited observers in this meeting.

January 21. Mexican government negotiator Manuel Camacho Solis acknowledged that "we must ask forgiveness from indigenous groups and communities for all the suffering they have undergone"--a statement indicating reversal of the Mexican government's earlier denunciation of the Zapatistas as outlaws.

January 25. President Salinas met with 42 representatives of CEOIC in the capital city of Tuxtla Gutierrez. He was met with fiery speeches demanding a definitive end to the repression, and a just solution to the conflict.

February 6-8. Indian and campesino organizations seized four town halls and held protests in at least a dozen other communities to demand the removal of corrupt local (PRI) authorities.

February 21. With Bishop Samuel Ruiz acting as mediator the, EZLN and Mexican government, represented by ex-mayor of Mexico City Manuel Camacho Solis, began negotiations in the Cathedral of San Cristobal.

March 3. The government and EZLN announced an end to the first round of talks. The government announced its peace proposal which the EZLN promised to present to their base communities for a final decision.

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March 7. Over 70 Indigenous organizations met at an electoral convention in Mexico City, and passed a resolution criticizing the government's Chiapas peace proposal for failing to adequately address Indigenous rights under the constitution.

March 23. PRI presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, was assassinated at a campaign rally in Tijuana. The army reportedly intensified a troop build-up in an attempt to surround EZLN positions particularly in the areas of Las Margaritas, Ocosingo and Altamirano. The EZLN then suspended its consultation process, stating that it was forced to devote all resources to preparing for an attack.

Throughout March, Indigenous and campesino organizations across the state take over lands held by giant landowners. In contrast, the EZLN forbids takeovers in the region under their control.

May 4. Camacho Solis met with the EZLN and Bishop Samuel Ruiz to discuss renewing the dialogue.

May 29-31. The EZLN announced it had concluded consultations with base communities, and was beginning to count votes, analyze opinions received and prepare a response.

June 13. Zapatistas' base communities rejected the government's peace proposal.

June 16. Manuel Camacho Solis resigned as government negotiator while criticizing PRI presidential candidate Ernesto Zedillo. Bishop Samuel Ruiz also announced his resignation as mediator in the conflict.

Human Rights Violations

Following the uprising, the Mexican army, in collaboration with local caciques and plantation owners unleashed a brutal campaign of repression and terror against Indigenous and campesino organizations and villages suspected of sympathizing with the EZLN. Although the details of many of these atrocities may never be known, descriptions of several cases, such as those listed below, were gathered by Indigenous and human rights organizations and broadcast around the world.

January 5. A photo of five corpses with

single bullet wounds to the head was published around the world. The bodies were found in the Ocosingo market and, according to reports, were members of the last group of Zapatistas to retreat from the area. A delegation of forensic specialists reported that this scene bore all the signs of an extra-judicial execution.

January 6. The Mexican army detained 14 men from the Indigenous community of El Chanal when the mayor accused them of being Zapatistas. They were beaten, tied by the hands and feet and taken first by military vehicle and later by helicopter to the military base of Teran in Tuxla Gutierrez. They were reported being tortured by electric shock and beatings over the course of a week before being released.

January 7. three Tzeltal elders from the community of Morelia were tortured by the army in the local church, while other men of the village were detained outside. Thirty-one other community members detained by the army were reportedly tortured while in government custody.

January 16. Jorge Mariano Solis Lopez and Eduardo Gomez Hernandez, 21 and 22 years old respectively, were apprehended by municipal police while driving through the town of Las Margaritas. Police identified the truck they were driving as one requisitioned by the EZLN in their takeover of the town. According to local reports, they were taken to the municipal police station and hours later, put on an army truck heading for El Progreso. On January 24, their cadavers appeared at the regional hospital in Comitán after being discovered by a hunter near the community of

Agua Campesino Organization was assassinated in an ambush by a group of heavily armed men as he left his village of El Carmalito near Simojovel. His son was also critically wounded in the attack. Mariano Perez was a representative of the State Council of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations of Chiapas. Many other representatives have received death threats, including Margarito Ruiz of the Independent Indian People's Front.

In testimony before the US congress, Amnesty International documented "reports of at least 9 extrajudicial executions; 15 arbitrary killings, including the killing of a 10 year old child; 3 cases of "disappearance" and serious concern about the possible "disappearance" of at least 6 others' and at least 100 cases of torture and ill-treatment, including at least 2 cases of possible rape of women in detention." All these violations were allegedly carried out by the Mexican army or police forces. In addition, they confirmed the occurrence of hundreds of arbitrary arrests.

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