



SIPAZ



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SIPAZ 30 years: Community outreach at the event for the freedom of Alberto Patishán. El Bosque, March 2017 © SIPAZ

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SIPAZ is an international observation program created in 1995, after the Zapatista uprising in 1994 to monitor the conflict in Chiapas, Mexico.

International Service for Peace (Servicio Internacional para la Paz or **SIPAZ**) is a response from the international community to the request of Mexican human rights organizations and religious leaders in Mexico, asking for a permanent international presence in Chiapas. In February 1995, a delegation of various international peace organizations came to Chiapas. They decided to create an organization encompassing a coalition of faith based and nonviolence based organizations in the United States, Europe and Latin America that shared a common concern regarding the situation in Chiapas.

Today **SIPAZ** supports the search for nonviolent solutions and aids in the construction of a culture of peace and dialogue between the actors involved in the conflict in Chiapas as well as, increasingly, in other areas in Mexico (Oaxaca and Guerrero). **SIPAZ** also serves as a bridge for communication and exchange between other organizations and networks that work to construct a just and lasting peace at a local, national, regional and international level ■

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The SIPAZ International Team in Chiapas :

- Maintains an international presence and accompanies processes that are working towards the construction of a culture of peace in Mexico.
- Provides trustworthy communication that integrates the voices of local actors and mobilizes the local, national and international community in the search for alternative solutions to the causes of violence in Mexico.
- Joins together with organizations, movements and networks in order to share and strengthen the processes that are leading towards building a just peace.
- Maintains contact and dialogue with the many different actors that are present in the conflict.

SIPAZ recognizes and respects the principles of non-intervention and sovereignty of the Mexican State and its citizens upon whom must depend the negotiation and initiative that are necessary in order to achieve an eventual solution to the conflict.

The coalition members of **SIPAZ** represent many years of experience in international non-governmental peacemaking and conflict resolution. Building on that experience, **SIPAZ** seeks to play a facilitative role enhancing the context in which Mexicans are working to solve largely Mexican problems ■



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Mexico Human Rights Conspicuously Absent from President Claudia Sheinbaum's First Report

On September 1st, President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo presented her First Government Report. Among the achievements, she highlighted that Mexico was better positioned than other countries in the face of the new tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump: *“Mexico has the lowest average percentage of tariffs in the world, and we continue working with the various government ministries of our neighboring country. We are convinced that, within the framework of the Trade Agreement, we can achieve even better conditions.”*

Regarding domestic matters, the president also highlighted the approval of constitutional reforms and laws, including the reform of the Judiciary; the incorporation of the National Guard into the Ministry of National Defense; the reform of Article 2 to recognize Indigenous and Afro-Mexican peoples as subjects of public law; and the reforms to reclaim Pemex and the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE)

as public companies. She presented figures on economic growth and the progress of several flagship projects, as well as the coverage of social programs. Regarding security, she touted reductions in intentional homicides, high-impact crimes, and femicides, although she acknowledged threats such as organized crime, money laundering, irregular migration, drug trafficking, cyberattacks, and fuel theft.

Human Rights: The Report's Conspicuously Absent Issue

“For an administration that seeks to distance itself from neoliberal governments and presents itself as a promoter of social rights, sovereignty, freedom, and democracy, it is disconcerting that human rights have been disregarded in their entirety in this first major report,” declared the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Centro PRODH). While acknowledging progress in social rights (housing, indigenous peoples' rights, women's rights), it pointed to *“major setbacks*

in civil and political rights.” In particular, it stated that *“regarding Judicial Reform, it must be said: the new era of the judiciary begins with its independence called into question,”* while *“the public prosecutor's offices—the true central source of impunity—remain untouched.”* As for the reform that allowed the incorporation of the National Guard into the Ministry of Defense, PRODH affirmed that *“it confirms the deepening militarization of public security without civilian checks and balances.”* It also said that *“the most worrying thing (...) has to do with (...) the great injustices against victims in the country, particularly those related to the serious crisis of disappearances (...), only minimal reference was made to regulatory reforms—which have not been sufficient to address the crisis—and not to the serious crisis of more*

Claudia Sheinbaum presented her first government report in Mexico, September 1, 2025, National Palace
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34 human rights defenders were killed between October 2024 and October 2025 © EDUCA

than 130,000 disappeared persons and the commitments to reverse it.” “Nor was any reference made to the issue of human rights in general. In short, as has been expressed on several occasions from the presidential podium: what is not named, does not exist,” it stated.

Likewise, in September, following the popular election held in June, half of the Federal Judiciary took office, while the other half will be elected in 2027. On that same day, Human Rights Watch (HRW) declared that “the constitutional reform that replaces half of the federal judiciary with judges elected by popular vote has undermined judicial independence in Mexico.” “Far from being an effort to make the judiciary more democratic and efficient, this reform is likely to create a judiciary loyal to the government,” it said.

Later, in October, groups of relatives of disappeared persons, organizations, activists, and academics

presented a shadow report to the UN Committee against Enforced Disappearances (CED) in Switzerland, titled “Widespread and/or Systematic Disappearances Committed in Mexico.” The report indicates that disappearances occur throughout the country and that many of them were committed by state authorities, such as the military, police, and prosecutors, within the framework of the so-called “war on drugs.” According to the data, between 2017 and 2025, there were only 373 convictions for enforced disappearance, less than 1% of the cases. They also reported that there are more than 72,000 unidentified bodies and thousands of clandestine graves in the country. Finally, the groups and organizations called for international intervention to stop this tragedy, as they consider that Mexico is experiencing

the worst disappearance crisis in all of Latin America.

The Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) activated Article 34 of the UN International Convention against Enforced Disappearances, a procedure that opens the possibility of involving the United Nations General Assembly. This is the first time it has been applied to a State Party. In response, Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum accused the UN Committee of “great ignorance” and asserted that this phenomenon is primarily linked to organized crime. For his part, Mexico’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Hector Vasconcelos y Cruz, rejected the measure. “The application of this article should be reserved for exceptional situations,” he stated. Amnesty International reminded the Mexican State that the number of missing persons, the impunity, and the vulnerability of searching families are not normal; they are “exceptional situations.”

In November, coinciding with the Day of the Dead, the monitoring report “All Their Names, All Their Struggles 2025” was published. It concluded that, during the period from October 1st, 2024, to October 24th, 2025, “neither change nor transformation was observed: repression and lethal violence against human rights defenders continues.” This monitoring documented 34 murders of human rights defenders and four enforced disappearances during this period. Land, truth, and justice are the causes that generate the most attacks (76.3%). Violence against members of groups searching for missing persons was also identified as a major concern (26.3% of the cases recorded). 44.1% of the murders of human rights defenders are concentrated in the south-southeast of the country (Oaxaca 10, Guerrero 3, Chiapas 2). De facto powers remain the main perpetrators of these attacks against life (71.1%), while in 18.4% of cases, there is no precise information about the facts.

Insecurity and Organized Crime: Other Major Pending Issues

In November, the assassination of Carlos Manzo, the mayor of Uruapan, Michoacan—known for his firm stance against organized crime—generated national outrage. The perpetrator, a 17-year-old identified as a recruit for the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), used a weapon that was later linked to other recent acts of violence. The attack was interpreted as a blow to local authorities and the rule of law, since the fact that a mayor, despite having police and National Guard protection, was publicly assassinated underscores the weakness of the state in the face of organized crime.

This event provoked condemnation and demonstrations both in Michoacan and nationally. Faced with violence and impunity, citizens demand justice and hold state and federal authorities responsible for insecurity. The intimidating effect on other politicians is obvious: if a mayor with Manzo's profile is eliminated, who else will dare to confront them? In response, the federal government launched a security plan ("Michoacán Peace and Justice Plan") with a military deployment of more than 10,500 personnel and a multimillion-dollar investment. The initiative was presented as a potential turning point, with greater military control and a reinforced state presence; however, it also carries risks: a strategy focused almost exclusively on security, without addressing structural causes (poverty, recruitment of young people by cartels), and risks proving insufficient or even counterproductive. Claudia Sheinbaum's administration faces a significant test: it must demonstrate its ability to guarantee security and justice, especially after such a high-profile crime. If the pacification plan fails to deliver tangible results, the political cost could be considerable.



CHIAPAS: "Peace has arrived" in Chiapas, governor claims, amid growing demands for justice and security.

In October, a press conference was held with representatives of the Platform for Peacebuilding in Mexico. They denounced the discrepancy between the official discourse on "peace" and the reality in Chiapas and throughout the country, marked by violence and unresolved structural problems. The Platform pointed out that while the governor of Chiapas, Eduardo Ramirez Aguilar, was promoting a march in Chicomuselo under the slogan "the peace that has returned," thousands of members of Believing Peoples from the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas made a pilgrimage to San Andres Larrainzar to remember Father Marcelo Pérez Pérez, who was murdered for his fight for justice in October 2024. "We see containment measures rather than solutions. We see displaced communities, without the security necessary to return to their territories due to the presence of criminal groups. We see victims who do not dare to report crimes for fear of reprisals, which calls into question government

statements that Chiapas has become the second safest place in the country. Furthermore, several of the actions carried out involved human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions and torture," they denounced. They recalled that true peace cannot be built on restraint or silence, but rather on truth, justice, reparation, and the active participation of communities.

The pilgrimage in San Andres and its demands are not isolated voices. In August, residents of the Chol region made a pilgrimage for peace in Palenque. "We join the outcry of our communities to denounce the injustices our people are experiencing, especially the insecurity and violence that threatens life," they stated. "We are aware that we cannot have peace in our state (...) while there are human rights violations, violence, crime, insecurity, and our brothers and sisters whose fundamental rights are being violated," they declared.

Also in August, hundreds of Catholics made a pilgrimage in Venustiano Carranza. They denounced that organized crime continues to generate violence and the forced displacement of entire communities due to the denial of its existence by federal and state authorities. They stated that clashes

Pilgrimage to commemorate the first anniversary of the assassination of Tsotsil priest Marcelo Pérez, San Andrés Larrainzar, October 2025
© SIPAZ



Activities in Tuxtla Gutiérrez within the framework of the International Day of the Disappeared, August 2025
© SIPAZ

between drug trafficking groups continue to cause kidnappings, disappearances, injuries, and murders.

In September, the Selva Negra Human Rights Center questioned official narratives about progress in security, poverty reduction, and transformation. *“The cancer of criminality has reached the very core of these territories,”* they stated. They also questioned the creation of the elite Pakal Immediate Reaction Force unit: *“In the communities where it has operated, it has left behind invasions of their territories, raids on private property without warrants, and intimidation of the population,”* they declared. They also condemned mega-infrastructure and tourism projects.

Several additional human rights concerns

In August, the Guatemalan government reported that it granted humanitarian residency permits to 161 citizens from Chiapas seeking refuge from violence perpetrated by organized crime groups. These are 39 families, including 69 minors, originally from communities in the municipality of Frontera Comalapa. The governor of Chiapas, Eduardo Ramírez, denied

that there are forced displacements in the state due to organized crime violence, claiming that these reports are part of an attempt to discredit his security strategy. The state attorney general, Jorge Luis Llaven Abarca, stated that the displaced people left voluntarily, arguing that they possibly had family ties to individuals responsible for violence who were subject to arrest warrants. *“Today you can go anywhere in the Sierra without any problem, because there is an institutional presence of all law enforcement agencies. Peace and tranquility in Chiapas are guaranteed,”* he said.

On August 30th, another growing problem in Chiapas came to light: disappearances. Two actions were carried out: first, an event organized by the Working Group Against Disappearances in Chiapas, which declared that *“unlike other regions of Latin America, in Mexico the disappearance of people is not a problem of the past, but a crisis that worsens year after year”*; and second, a march coordinated by the Madres en Resistencia (Mothers in Resistance) collective, which demanded *“that Governor Eduardo Ramirez and Attorney General Jorge Luis Llaven Abarca conduct concrete investigations, that they truly search for our*

loved ones and that it not be just a charade. Many families don’t dare to come forward for fear of reprisals, but only united can we pressure them to do their job,” they emphasized.

In September, the Fray Bartolome de Las Casas Center for Human Rights (Frayba) reported on *“the strategies of encirclement and dispossession of the territory recovered by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), carried out in the Zapatista Autonomous Community of Belen, (...), officially part of the municipality of Ocosingo.”* The attacks included *“refusal of dialogue, incursion and measurement of the autonomous territory recovered in 1994, threats, theft of crops, burning of two houses, and dispossession.”* These acts were allegedly perpetrated by *“a group of civilians along with the Ocosingo municipal police, the State Police, the Government Delegate, the Chiapas State Attorney General’s Office, and members of the Mexican Army.”* According to Frayba, the recent attacks and harassment in Zapatista territories constitute a continuation of a strategy by the Mexican State to dispossess lands and confront the EZLN, endangering the lives of the population.

In October, the Observatory of Human Rights Defenders in Chiapas reported 79 attacks against human rights defenders and journalists during the first half of 2025 in the state, a 29% increase compared to the same period in 2024. Sixty-two percent were physical attacks and 38% were digital attacks. The 79 recorded incidents represent an average of 11 violent incidents per month.

OAXACA: Attacks on Human Rights Defenders and Other Human Rights Concerns

The ongoing campaign *“Wings and Roots of Social Movements in Oaxaca”* has documented that in the first two and a half years of the current state administration, 44 human rights defenders were attacked individually and 70 acts of collective aggression were recorded. A particularly worrying aspect

highlighted in this monitoring is that 50% of all recorded attacks are related to the Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (CIIT), a project that has catalyzed attacks against human rights defenders in the region. According to the same monitoring, government responses to address the conflict have been characterized by omission, provocation, or conflict management in 81% of these cases.

Also recorded were 149 acts of resistance, as well as emerging strategies and alternatives to confront the scenario of conflict and violence: “If Oaxaca is characterized by anything, it is by its organizational strength and creativity in forms of resistance,” processes that are organized in a context marked by the increase in conflicts over land and territorial control, the rise in national security measures and militarization in the country, as well as by the expansion of increasingly visible and violent criminal structures and illicit markets.

Another trend observed during Salomon Cruz Jara’s administration has been the growing criminalization of protest. In this regard, the Oaxaca State Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office (DDHPO) has registered a significant number of complaints against the police: 137 complaints had been filed by July 2025. This suggests a problem with the actions of security forces, including abuses, mistreatment, and human rights violations.

Another relevant aspect that civil society organizations in the state have identified as part of a human rights crisis is the increasing number of disappearances. In August, search collectives and civil society organizations marched in the city of Oaxaca to denounce the insensitivity and indifference of the authorities. They urged the immediate creation of a Specialized Prosecutor’s Office for Disappearances in Oaxaca, with full autonomy, a sufficient budget, trained personnel, and a human rights, gender, and intercultural perspective. They also emphasized the importance of implementing an effective search program that leads to concrete actions



Demonstration against femicides in Oaxaca
© Consorcio Oaxaca

for prevention, immediate search, location, and comprehensive support for families. In the last three years, the number of missing persons in Oaxaca has increased by 81.8%, the majority of whom are young men between the ages of 15 and 34.

One final point to emphasize: according to the Femicide Observatory of the Rosario Castellanos Women’s Studies Group, 64 violent deaths of women have been recorded in Oaxaca so far in 2025, 62% of which are classified as femicides. During the current administration of Salomon Jara Cruz, a member of the MORENA party—from 2022 to September 2025—a total of 267 violent deaths of women have been recorded. Despite the fact that a Gender Violence Alert was activated seven years ago in 40 municipalities of Oaxaca, no significant changes have been observed.

GUERRERO: Criminal Violence and Disappearances

In September, during the 11th anniversary of the disappearance of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa, mothers and fathers denounced that, despite the expectation of a “democratic tran-

sition,” they continue to demand truth and justice. Marches were held in Guerrero and Mexico City to reiterate four central demands: clarifying the facts, extraditing key actors involved, accessing the 800 still-classified investigation files, and resuming field searches. Although there was a change in leadership at the Special Investigation and Litigation Unit for the Ayotzinapa Case (UEILCA), the Committee of Mothers and Fathers denounced that the government of Claudia Sheinbaum has not produced results. This lack of progress is also reflected in the field searches, which are restricted by the absence of findings and by staff reductions due to budget cuts.

The Ayotzinapa case is just the tip of the iceberg of the disappearance crisis in Guerrero. In August, groups of family members, victims of violence, and human rights defenders marched in Acapulco and Chilpancingo for the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. They demanded that authorities search for approximately 4,500 missing persons, a figure that places Guerrero as the fifth state with the most cases in the country. They also demanded the identification of bodies piling up in overcrowded Forensic Medical Services, as well as



11th anniversary of the Ayotzinapa case
© Tlachinollan

compliance with demands made since 2017: a state law on disappearances that would allow for the creation of a genetic identification center and grant budgetary autonomy to state commissions for search and victim support.

The omnipresence of organized crime is the essential backdrop for understanding the magnitude of these problems and the persistent impunity. In October, authorities and community police from the CIPOG-EZ and the CRAC-PC-PF were attacked by the criminal group Los Ardillos, the National Indigenous Council (CNI) reported. The confrontation left three community police officers dead and seven wounded. The communities accused the attackers of operating with the support and protection of the authorities. They have suffered narco-paramilitary violence for

years: in the last decade, 66 people have been murdered and 23 disappeared.

That same month, journalists from various media outlets in Iguala requested the intervention of President Sheinbaum after reporting death threats from organized crime if they published information about the attack against lawyer and activist Anselmo Bautista Martinez, who died as a result of the assault. Bautista had been attacked a few days after filing a complaint with the Guerrero State Attorney General's Office against two public prosecutors for various crimes. Known for exposing cases of judicial corruption and for his work with groups of families of the disappeared, his murder generated additional fear among reporters, who warned that pressure from organized crime affects journalists in

numerous areas of the state, not only in Iguala.

Finally, in October, more than 300 people gathered in Mezcala, in the municipality of Eduardo Neri, to bid farewell to Father Bertoldo Pantaleon Estrada, who had been missing until his body was found. During the ceremony, the bishop of the Chilpancingo-Chilapa diocese, Jose de Jesus Gonzalez Hernandez, denounced the fact that there are now communities in Guerrero where priests are not allowed to enter. He pointed out that the presence of criminal groups imposes restrictions even on religious figures, demonstrating the extent to which security and territorial control exercised by these organizations have deteriorated ■

COLLABORATE ECONOMICALLY WITH SIPAZ

Your donations make it possible for SIPAZ to continue offering international observation and presence in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero. We need your help!

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SIPAZ, 30 Years Accompanying the Construction of True Peace in Mexico

This year, 2025, SIPAZ - International Service for Peace - celebrates three decades of unwavering work for nonviolence, respect for human rights, and peacebuilding in Chiapas. Since its founding in 1995, in the context of the Zapatista uprising, SIPAZ has evolved to respond to the need to adapt to the new challenges presented by the context and constant changes. The experience accumulated over these thirty years represents not only a history of commitment, accompaniment, and historical memory, but also a living lesson in how international accompaniment can contribute to strengthening local peace processes ▀

Birth in a Turbulent Historical Moment

SIPAZ has its roots in the year following the uprising of the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), which began on January 1st, 1994. This event opened the world's eyes to the plight of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, a reality marked by profound social, economic, and political inequality, and by decades of marginalization, dispossession, and human rights violations.

It was in this context that, in 1995, international organizations with experience in peace, human rights, and nonviolence joined together to respond to the need for a permanent international presence in Chiapas, aimed at preventing tensions from escalating into even greater violence. This coalition formally gave rise to SIPAZ.

From its inception, SIPAZ defined itself as an international, nonviolent, and politically independent organization. Its mission has been clear: to deter and prevent socio-political violence, as well as to promote respect for human rights and peacebuilding.

Through accompaniment, information dissemination, workshops, and strengthening ties with local, national, and international organizations, SIPAZ has fostered capacity

Accompanying
the caravan "The
South Resists",
coordinated by the
National Indigenous
Congress (CNI),
May 2023
© SIPAZ



Accompanying the Mothers in Resistance collective in meetings with the state government and prosecutor's office, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, September 2025
© SIPAZ

building for the nonviolent transformation of conflicts and the peaceful defense of human rights. This work has taken deep root and remains in the hands of community leaders, women, youth, and human rights defenders.

Lessons from Three Decades on the Path

During these 30 years, SIPAZ has experienced challenging moments; it has learned, adapted, and sought diverse ways to address complex contexts for nonviolent work, the pursuit of justice, and peacebuilding.

Initially, several actors questioned SIPAZ for its accompaniment in a context marked by the presence of an armed group. Others questioned its nonviolent approach, considering it a potential challenge to the EZLN. It is important to note that SIPAZ's initial stance was one of complete political independence, committed to opening spaces for dialogue that would unlock the agenda and address the structural causes of the armed conflict. Likewise, after the ceasefire that occurred twelve days after the uprising, the EZLN deployed essentially nonviolent strategies. These are the actions that SIPAZ has supported.

International accompaniment organizations typically focus their work on human rights defenders and social leaders working for peace. In the case of SIPAZ, the attacks and threats impacted entire communities, so a different,

more comprehensive model of observation and presence was developed, with a psychosocial focus.

From the San Andres dialogues, through the Acteal Massacre, and up to the outbreak of criminal violence, SIPAZ has sought the opening that allows it to continue supporting community processes and keep alive the search for light amidst the chaos, a light it has always found in the hope of the people and their

• *"The experience accumulated over these thirty years represents not only a history of commitment, accompaniment, and historical memory, but also a living lesson in how international accompaniment can contribute to strengthening local peace processes."*

strength in struggle.

One of SIPAZ's most significant lessons in its early years was the need to move beyond the traditional international accompaniment model, generally very focused on protection, in order to better respond to the specificities of the context and fully take advantage of existing opportunities. In the 1990s, beyond the realm of negotiations and in response to the impacts of Low-Intensity Warfare (LIW), SIPAZ focused on limiting direct violence in so-called secondary community conflicts and transforming the context of cultural violence that could sustain them. This was achieved through work with intermediary actors (track 2, as well as grassroots actors, within the framework of the multi-track strategy), through its peace education and interfaith work.

Subsequently, hotspots multiplied in other parts of the country (for example, Atenco and Oaxaca), primarily in territories where autonomy movements similar to that of the EZLN were being promoted. These movements were systematically repressed (presumably to prevent the phenomenon from spreading nationwide). Given this scenario,



SIPAZ decided to establish a presence in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero, taking into account the similarities between these states and Chiapas in terms of poverty and the marginalization of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

In general, SIPAZ's primary role has been that of observer and narrator: collecting testimonies, documenting human rights violations, monitoring and producing information through its blog, as well as through reports and analyses that, on occasion, open spaces for dialogue with national and international authorities. In recent years, maintaining a channel of communication with local and state authorities has been difficult, so we have begun to focus more on dialogue with international actors to raise awareness of the violence and human rights violations in Chiapas and to enable them to influence changes in the current situation (a "boomerang" effect).

In this way, we also work to generate historical memory, which can contribute to accountability and the mobilization of national and international civil society in the future.

In SIPAZ's thirty years of work, we have learned and maintain that international accompaniment can contrib-

ute to building peace from the ground up, without impositions, always respecting the dignity, struggles, and perspectives of the diverse realities of the people. In this sense, topics such as migration or the defense of Mother Earth have begun to be addressed, which have become central to various defense strategies for the people.

• *"... SIPAZ has sought the opening that allows it to continue supporting community processes and keep alive the search for light amidst the chaos, a light it has always found in the hope of the people and their strength in struggle."*

Challenges Through the Years

SIPAZ has sought to evolve in response to the changing contexts it has been monitoring. Forms of violence have diversified. In addition to historical conflicts, new dynamics have emerged related to organized crime, land dispossession, militarization, and impunity. Our history also reflects the persistent challenges facing Mexico: inequality, structural and common violence, corruption, and impunity.

Significantly, from 2006 onward, while there was increasing talk of "war in Mexico," both within and outside the country, the reference was no longer to the unresolved

Presentation with young people, August 2023 © SIPAZ



Oaxaca
© SIPAZ

Current Challenges

In contrast to the denial or minimization of what was happening at the federal level under AMLO and the inaction or possible complicity of the state government headed by Rutilio Escandon Cadenas, a change was perceived after Eduardo Ramírez Aguilar took office as state governor in December 2024. However, El Obse, in its Second Report, covering January to July 2025, documented that, *“despite official pronouncements about improvements in security, violence—including disappearances, forced recruitment, and displacement—persists in many communities, keeping human rights defenders at constant risk. Those working in documentation, visibility, and protection face adverse conditions that hinder their work and increase their exposure to attacks.”*

For its part, the *“Chiapas 2025 Report: Pending Peace”* by the Border Region Working Group questions the militarized pacification approach adopted by the Chiapas government in response to violence perpetrated by organized crime groups. The report states that, *“despite official rhetoric about conflict reduction, security strategies have deepened militarization and the presence of elite forces such as the FRIP [Pakales Immediate Reaction Forces], further straining the social fabric of communities and increasing cases of arbitrary deprivation of liberty and unrecognized displacement.”*

This situation complicates the work of international observers, as it entails security risks for observers, activists, and migrants traveling through the region.

In this regard, the violence generated by the dispute between criminal groups on the border with Guatemala not only impacts local populations but also hinders the safe work of international organizations and observers. *“The presence of militarized security forces and armed groups creates an environment of insecurity that limits access, mobility, and the collection of reliable information, exposing external actors to physical and legal risks,”* the same report states.

The marked differences between official narratives, which promote an image of *“restored peace,”* and those documented by the Observatory of Social and Economic Integrity (OBSE) and organizations that record persistent acts of violence, complicate the dissemination and impact of the documented information. This is compounded by the emergence of silenced zones (where people choose not to report or publish for fear of reprisals). This leads to critical information being minimized or delegitimized by authorities who prioritize narratives of order and control.

The challenges of international accompaniment in Chiapas today, *“in a context of persistent violence, militarization, complex human mobility, and political tensions,”* re-

• *“... a peace that is not merely the absence of visible violence, but a shared project of justice, reconciliation, and dignity.”*



Workshop with seminarians from the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas (2022-2023)
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quire new strategies. These efforts must ensure the safety of both those providing support and those being supported, defend human rights, and document and raise awareness of human rights violations. They must also foster collaboration among organizations and cooperation with other international bodies, all while strengthening local capacities for organization and protection against systematic violations. International work is not only urgent but essential

to highlighting realities that often remain outside official narratives and

• *"... our commitment will remain to be present where dignity is threatened, where silence hurts, where violence lurks, and where hope needs allies to keep that light alive."*

to continue supporting the most vulnerable communities in protecting their fundamental rights.

Perspectives for the Future: Between Memory, Hope, and Action

Looking ahead on this 30th anniversary is both a challenge and an opportunity to reaffirm and update our mission, renew our commitments, and build new paths to peace.

Reaffirming the Commitment to True Peace

Strengthening training and information work for peace. SIPAZ considers it essential to consolidate processes that not only prevent violence but also promote the construction of true peace based on justice.

Innovate Accompaniment Strategies

Faced with new forms of violence, it is necessary to explore new models of accompaniment: combining physical and digital support, remote monitoring, strengthening community networks and partnerships, as well as documentation and reporting.

Historical Memory

SIPAZ will continue to collect testimonies and conduct reflections and analyses. It will continue to nurture memory, convinced that this archive can be a pedagogical resource for new generations, researchers, activists, and for community reconciliation processes.

Advocacy/Diplomacy for Peace

At a time when many rights are under pressure, SIPAZ will maintain its role as an advocacy player: making violations visible and denouncing them, and collaborating with organizations, international bodies, and human rights mechanisms.

Strengthening the protection of human rights defenders

Designing and consolidating support schemes with a gender and risk perspective, in conjunction with legal, psychological, and community security programs for human rights defenders. It is vital that SIPAZ integrate preventive and structural protection into its long-term strategy.



Analysis at the Meeting for the Defense of Mother Earth, September 2017
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Accompanying the Mothers in Resistance collective in meetings with the state government and prosecutor's office, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, September 2025
© SIPAZ



Lights of Hope Young People Building Peace in the World

“Imagine starting your day with 150 young people who radiate a commitment to positive change. Whose collective and individual experiences of crisis and oppression surpass what most of us see in a lifetime. And who transform this and decide to be a force for good.”

Benedikta Von Seherr-thoss

This year, two events relevant to young people working for peacebuilding and for a society where human rights are a reality, and where a dignified life free from violence can be lived, took place. SIPAZ had the privilege of participating in these events during November: the Peace Forum in Paris and the Second Youth Conference for Peace and Security in Brussels ▀

Peace Forum in Paris: Reinventing Diplomacy in a Changing World

For the past eight years, the Forum has been a platform for sharing responses from multiple actors in favor of global peace and sustainable prosperity. This space brings together key decision-makers to foster collaboration among governments, international organizations, businesses, and civil society. It operates on the premise that diplomacy should not remain merely verbal, but must reinvent itself to address the needs of a constantly changing world.

This forum is invaluable, as it allows the diverse opinions of over 300 participants from various countries to converge respectfully and constructively, with the aim of bridging the North-South and East-West divides in global governance.

SIPAZ participated in a session that reflected on how to empower youth networks to defend democracy and global peace. This stems from the fact

that young people represent more than 40% of the world’s population and will be the ones defining future global governance. The conversation highlighted why young people are uniquely positioned to act as catalysts for change: their ability to build trust across divisions, leverage digital tools to advocate for causes, and act swiftly through informal channels. The role of youth networks as amplifiers of collective action was also emphasized, including critical perspectives on why democracy is not necessarily delivering tangible benefits in terms of employment and opportunities for participation and influence in their societies.

In our presentation, we stressed that, for young people, peace is more than the absence of conflict. Peace is justice, opportunity, and dignity. It is the moment when young people can speak their truth without fear, and when all people are treated with respect, regardless of their origin, social status, or gender. The examples presented showed that young people in Latin America are committed to

*“Second Youth
Conference on
Peace and Security”,
Brussels, Belgium,
November 2025
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Peace Forum
in Paris, France,
November 2025
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building a society free from violence and where dignity is the norm.

Networks amplify this impact by providing safe spaces, a sense of solidarity, and trust. As our representative noted, *“At the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, also known as GPPAC, the world’s largest network of local peacebuilders, of which I am a member, we have seen how connecting young people at the local, national, and global levels strengthens capacities, fosters peer learning, and empowers them to influence policies and practices rooted in local realities. These networks provide emotional support, safe spaces for collaboration, and amplify the reach of local initiatives. They inspire young people to continue working for justice, knowing they are not alone.”*

“Second Conference on Youth, Peace and Security”, Brussels - 2025

In 2018, UN Security Council Resolution 2419 called for the genuine and full inclusion of young people in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements, as well as in decision-making spaces. In 2020, UN Security Council Resolution 2535 established the relevant steps for implementing the *“Youth, Peace and Security”* (YPS) agenda within the framework of UN peacekeeping operations. That same year, the Security Council, in Resolution 2553, recognized the link between security sector reform and Youth, Peace and Security, emphasizing that young people must participate in peacebuilding initiatives aimed at reforming these sectors.

It is in this context that 150 young people from 80 countries gathered for a week to talk, exchange experiences, and share challenges and opportunities for youth globally (see *Joint Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security – Final Document of the Second European Union Conference on Youth, Peace and Security*).

It was impressive to witness, once again, the diversity of backgrounds and realities present, from which we

will highlight some of the ways in which young people from different regions are becoming peacemakers.

Afghans for Progressive Thought (APT), Afghanistan

This is a youth-led non-profit organization working in Afghanistan to actively address human rights crises, with a specific focus on women’s rights, while promoting girls’ access to education through creative and impactful initiatives.

MAG International, Bosnia

This organization finds and destroys landmines, cluster munitions, and unexploded ordnance in conflict-affected areas. It also works to limit the causes and address the consequences of armed violence in communities. Since 1989, it has helped more than 20 million people in 70 countries.

Educating, Empowering, and Inspiring for Peace, Philippines

Invests in young people through seed grants awarded to youth organizations with promising ideas for peace and progress. Since 2020, it has provided financial support to 24 youth organizations whose programs have reached thousands of people across the Philippines.

Sustainable Peace, Italy

Empowers young women and men by providing them with the tools to make their voices heard and connecting them with policymakers. They organize conferences with human rights activists, politicians, and experts. They promote awareness campaigns, training, webinars, and events, and publish research to create a safer and more sustainable culture of dialogue among people at a transnational level.



Connecting Science with People and Policy through Innovation, Nepal

Seeks to leverage technology and innovation to generate social impact. The organization emerged in response to the growing need for data-driven solutions in areas such as disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, governance, and the use of open data. Empowering young people, fostering volunteerism, and leveraging digital tools to address some of the most pressing challenges in Nepal and beyond.

enous migrants in southern San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas. At the end of the conference, the young people reaffirmed that their participation is fundamental to transformative initiatives in their territories. Although there is no shared definition of what peace means, the young people agree on wanting a dignified life free from violence for all. Diversity doesn't have to be a weakness; it can be a great opportunity to build peace through creativity. Even amidst the chaos, there are glimmers of hope, paths to peace, and people working tirelessly every day to build a more just world ■

Give Me a Chance, Panama

This youth initiative believes that all young people, even those living in vulnerable, impoverished, and violent circumstances, can become engaged citizens with the right opportunities, regardless of where they grew up or their past. It works with young people through socio-emotional workshops in various juvenile detention and custody centers nationwide.

Jovenarte, Mexico

Youth Linking Territories, an organization created in 2012 in response to a growing context of addiction and violence, promotes a culture of peace and the exercise of cultural rights for young Indig-



"Second Youth Conference on Peace and Security", Brussels, Belgium, November 2025 © SIPAZ



INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AND SUPPORT

CHIAPAS

AUGUST

- We participated as observers in a blockade carried out by the Madres en Resistencia (Mothers in Resistance) collective, after Governor Eduardo Ramírez canceled a meeting with them at the last minute.

- We attended the event where the organization Colibres Movilidades Libres y Elegidas (Free and Chosen Mobilities) presented its report, *“Monitored Pathways: Digital Surveillance of Migrants and Human Rights Defenders on Mexico’s Southern Border.”*

- We attended the Forum *“The Disappearance of Persons and the State’s Duty in the Search and Location of Missing Persons,”* convened by the International Red Cross, which took place in San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

- We participated in the event organized in Tuxtla Gutierrez by the Working Group Against Disappearances in Chiapas, where they placed photographs, missing persons posters, flowers, and candles in front of the Government Palace, and read a statement indicating that *“unlike other regions of Latin America, in Mexico the disappearance of people is not a problem of the past, but a crisis that worsens year after year.”*

- We joined the march organized by the Mothers in Resistance collective, which took place in Tuxtla Gutierrez as part of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances.

SEPTEMBER

- We participated in the fifth Regional Meeting: For the Right to Truth, Justice, and Reparation, for families of disappeared persons, held in San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

- We were present, on two occasions, at the sit-in organized by the Mothers in Resistance collective in front of the State Prosecutor’s Office to demand compliance with a series of agreements.

- We accompanied a pilgrimage that took place in San Cristóbal de Las Casas (more than 20 pilgrimages were organized simultaneously in different municipalities) to pray for peace in Palestine, an action convened by the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

- We accompanied the Mothers in Resistance collective as observers in meetings with the government and the State Prosecutor’s Office.

OCTOBER

- We were present at the unveiling of a plaque bearing the name of Antonio Gonzalez Mendez, an indigenous Cholman, who was disappeared in the municipality of Sabanilla on January 18th, 1999. The event was held in compliance with a ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) in August 2024.

- On October 19th and 20th, we participated in the activities in San Andres Larrainzar commemorating the first anniversary of the assassination of Tsotsil priest Marcelo Perez Perez and continuing to demand justice in his case.

NOVEMBER

- On the Day of the Dead, we attended *“Unpunished Death,”* a public action organized by Melel Xojobal to denounce the deaths and remember the children and adolescents who *“should not have died”* due to violence, negligence, and impunity in Chiapas.

INFORMATION AND TRAINING FOR ACTION

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- In November, together with a Civil Observation Mission comprised of Members of the European Parliament and representatives from various European organizations, we held meetings with members of the National Institute of Migration and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance in Tapachula. We also visited the Siglo XXI Migration Detention Center.

- Also in November, at the invitation of the European Union, we participated in the Second Conference on *“Youth, Peace and Security,”* held in Brussels, Belgium.

PEACE EDUCATION

AUGUST

- We shared an analysis with women artisans participating in the Mujeres de Malz (Women of Corn) collective, from various municipalities in the Los Altos and Selva Norte regions.

- We offered a contextual presentation to the new collaborators of the German program Welthaus.

SEPTEMBER

- We participated with a presentation at the events organized for the 20th anniversary of the School of Peace Services and Consulting for Peace (SERAPAZ) in Mexico City.

- Together with other civil society organizations, we facilitated a workshop with representatives from the Las Margaritas parish.

OCTOBER

- We shared an analysis with women artisans participating in the Mujeres de Maiz (Women of Corn) collective, from various municipalities in the Los Altos and Selva Norte regions.

NOVEMBER

- We shared an analysis with members of the *“Núcleo”* (Nucleus), an analysis body of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas.

NETWORKING

- We attend plenary and committee meetings of the Chiapas Peace Network, Slamalil Kinal, at least once a month. In October, together with members of this platform, we co-convened and co-facilitated a meeting of civil society organizations, which was attended by approximately 80 people.

- Every two months, we attend operational meetings of the People’s Movement for Peace and Justice (MPPJ).

- We held several meetings with organizations collaborating on the project entitled *“Strengthening the Self-Protection Capacities of Human Rights Organizations and Communities in Chiapas,”* which we coordinate with Voces Mesoamericanas and Huridocs. In November, El Obse published a new report covering the first half of 2025.

- As members of the Platform for Peacebuilding in Mexico, we participate in monthly meetings for analysis and reflection based on the exchange of best practices. In October, we co-coordinated and participated in a meeting of this platform, held in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas. During this event, a press conference was held with representatives of the Platform, who denounced the discrepancy between the official discourse on *“peace”* and the reality experienced in Chiapas and throughout the country.

- In August, we participated in the Third In-Person Meeting of the physical protection learning community, *“Exchanging Knowledge for the Physical Protection of Individuals, Groups, and Communities that Promote and Defend Human Rights in Latin America,”* in San Jose, Costa Rica.

- In August and November, we participated in a security analysis forum in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, with the participation of several organizations located or working in that city.

- In September, we received a visit from several members of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Chiapas.

- In September, October, and November, we participated in a meeting with representatives of the pastoral zones belonging to the Monitoring Commission of the Congress of Mother Earth, a component of the social ministry of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

- In October, we participated in a meeting of the partners of the Global Platform for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).

- In October, we participated in the Peace Forum in Paris, France, on the panel *“Strengthening Youth Networks to Defend Peace and Global Democracy.”*

- In November, we participated in the preparation and implementation of a Civil Observation Mission made up of Members of the European Parliament and several European organizations, coordinated by the Mexico-European Union Platform for Peace and Human Rights, which visited several Mexican states, including Chiapas.

- In November, we participated in the Peacebuilders Meeting, held in the community of Siberia, municipality of Chanal, at the invitation of the Commission for Support to Community Unity and Reconciliation (CORECO) ■

