

**REPORT**



# SIPaz

Vol. XXXI N° 2 – June 2026

**LATEST:**

**Fentanyl, Migration,  
and Tariffs**

Continue to Strain Bilateral  
Agenda Between Mexico  
and United States

.....

**FOCUS:**

Chiapas

**«Pending Peace»**

Presentation of Joint Report  
Documenting  
Disappearances and  
Forced Displacement  
despite Pacification  
Narrative in Chiapas

.....

**ARTICLE:**

**International  
Accompaniment**

A Tool that Remains  
Valid despite  
Contextual Changes

.....

SIPaz  
**30**  
Years



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Barrio de Santa Lucía  
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de las Casas  
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*(+52.967) 631 60 55*



*chiapas@sipaz.org  
www.sipaz.org*



*sipaz.chiapas*



*sipaz.chiapas*



*@sipazchiapas*

In 1994, after the armed uprising by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), social and civil organizations, as well as Mexican religious leaders, recognized the need for a permanent international presence in Chiapas to help to avoid or lessen the risks of violent ends to conflict. In this context, in 1995, a group of international organizations with a long history of work in the areas of peace building, human rights, and nonviolent activism responded by creating a coalition consisting of members from the United States, Europe, and Latin America. They shared not only concerns about the situation in Chiapas, but also the hope that they could help to build a just, long-lasting peace in the state. From this came the project of SIPAZ, the International Service for Peace.

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 Southern Mexico. 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 ■

## The SIPAZ International Team in Chiapas aims at:

- Protecting and expanding the spaces of action for organized social groups in defense of human rights and towards the construction of positive peace.
- Informing and equipping national and international stakeholders to carry out diplomatic actions for peace in Southern Mexico.
- Promoting spaces of exchange and networking towards the defense of human rights and the construction of a culture of peace.
- Maintaining relationships that allow appropriate support, aimed at expanding the scope of action of organized local groups in the defense of human rights and towards the construction of positive peace.
- Informing and empowering grassroots actors to strengthen non-violent actions to defend their rights and to promote a culture of peace.

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 ■

3

LATEST:  
**Fentanyl, Migration, and Tariffs**  
Continue to Strain Bilateral Agenda  
Between Mexico and United States

---



15

FOCUS:  
Chiapas  
**«Pending Peace»**  
Presentation of Joint Report Documenting  
Disappearances and Forced Displacement  
despite Pacification Narrative in Chiapas

---

25

ARTICLE:  
**International Accompaniment**  
A Tool that Remains Valid despite Contextual  
Changes

---

29

SIPAZ Activities  
Mid-February to Mid-May 2026

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# Fentanyl, Migration, and Tariffs

## Continue to Strain Bilateral Agenda Between Mexico and United States

*In recent months, the relationship between Mexico and the United States has been marked by cooperation on security and border control, but also by sustained trade tensions and strong concerns regarding human rights ■*

A central focus of the bilateral relationship remains security and the fight against drug trafficking. Both countries have intensified joint operations against criminal organizations. In April, the United States accused Governor Ruben Rocha Moya and Sinaloa officials of collaborating with the Sinaloa Cartel and requested their extradition. The accusation alleges pacts with "Los Chapitos" to facilitate drug trafficking in exchange for bribes and institutional control. Rocha denied the allegations and requested a temporary leave of absence, while the Mexican Attorney General's Office stated that there is still insufficient evidence to proceed with legal action. In May, Mexican authorities captured the nephew of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, who faces extradition proceedings to the United States on organized crime charges.

Since the beginning of 2026, tariff threats have persisted, driven by US President Donald Trump, who links the economic measures to the fight against fentanyl and irregular migration. Mexico has sought

to avoid new US tariffs on steel, aluminum, and the automotive sector, underlining the high level of economic integration between the two countries. At the same time, the Mexican government has pro-





moted trade diversification strategies, strengthening relations with the European Union to reduce economic dependence on the United States.

Another key bilateral issue is migration. Both governments have reinforced border and security coordination through high-level meetings between US officials and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum. In May, it was reported that irregular migrant crossings on the US southern border decreased by 90% between October 2024 and May 2026, a figure considered the lowest in decades. Mexican authorities indicated that cooperation on this matter was based on principles of

*"coordination without subordination."* Meanwhile, human rights organizations denounced the tightening of US immigration policies. Various reports documented abuses against migrants detained in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities, including overcrowding, lack of medical care, and family separation. Among the most serious cases were reported violations of the rights of pregnant women and people in vulnerable situations. Since the beginning of Donald Trump's second term in January 2015, at least 46 deaths in ICE custody have been reported, 14 of whom were Mexican nationals. This situation has generated concern and criticism among

migrant organizations and communities. The Mexican government has demanded justice and transparency from the United States, without results to date.

The migration context on Mexico's southern border also reflects serious problems. Organizations such as the Southern Border Monitoring Collective have denounced corruption in the regularization processes in Mexico, where procedures that should be free can cost up to 40,000 pesos. This situation, coupled with the increasing militarization of the southern border and the arrival of migrants deported from the United States, has created conditions of extreme vulnerability. Migrants face inequality, risks to their physical and emotional health, family separation, and a lack of consular support.

### **Mexico: Human Rights Crisis - Just the Tip of the Iceberg?**

Between February and May 2026, Mexico continued to face high levels of violence, disappearances, and challenges to the institutions responsible for guaranteeing justice and human rights.

In April, Amnesty International published a critical assessment of Claudia Sheinbaum's first year in office. The report warned that problems such as violence, impunity,

PHOTOS:  
Activities of mothers searching for their missing children in the context of Mother's Day, San Cristóbal de las Casas, May 2026  
© SIPAZ

New report on environmental and land defenders, April 2026  
© CEMDA



disappearances, and militarization persist, and cautioned about the risk that some government policies could exacerbate them. It also pointed to risks to judicial independence, civic space, and the protection of human rights. Meanwhile, the *"Mexico Peace Index 2026"* reported a decrease in homicides but warned of an increase in disappearances, extortion, and domestic violence.

The crisis of enforced disappearances remained the main human rights issue. Although the government presented new search strategies,

collectives and families denounced impunity, a lack of results, and exclusion from decision-making. They also criticized the official figures and the classification of many cases as voluntary disappearances.

The publication of a report by the UN Committee against Enforced Disappearances generated tensions with Mexican authorities. While some organizations acknowledged its relevance, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) rejected its conclusions. During his visit to Mexico, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, recognized political will; however, he considered the actions taken insufficient in the face of a crisis involving more than 130,000 missing persons.

The mobilizations of mothers searching for their missing loved ones in May once again highlighted social discontent. The families denounced the fact that they continue their

search efforts due to the lack of official answers and demanded truth, justice, and greater protection for those searching for their relatives.

In a report published that same month, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) described the disappearances in Mexico as a *"serious human rights crisis"* and warned of possible links between criminal groups and authorities.

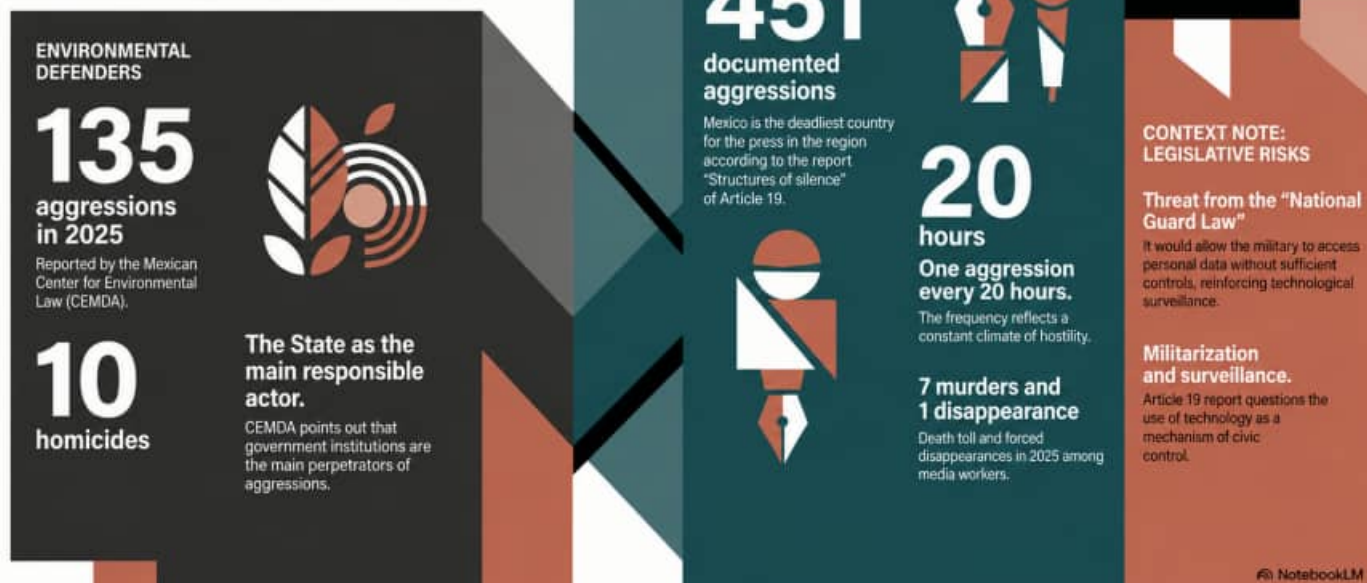
Closely linked to the disappearances crisis, organized crime violence remained a central issue. In February, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, *"El Mencho,"* leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), was killed during a federal operation in Jalisco. The events triggered roadblocks, fires, and armed attacks in several states, leaving dozens dead among security forces and suspected members of organized crime.

Visit of the United Nations High Commissioner to Mexico  
© PRODH CENTER



## Vulnerability of defenders and journalists in Mexico (2025)

Mexico has consolidated itself as a dangerous environment, with the State identified as an aggressor, in a context of violence and new legal frameworks that facilitate surveillance.



### Vulnerability of Defenders and Journalists: Another Point of Concern

Another issue of concern remains the vulnerable situation of journalists and human rights defenders. In February, dozens of activists demonstrated in Mexico City to demand an end to the violence in the country, where at least 40 human rights defenders were murdered in 2025 alone.

In March, debate arose following the decision by the Tax Administration Service (SAT) to revoke permits for more than 270 civil society organizations to receive tax-deductible donations. President Claudia Sheinbaum stated

that this is a *"technical"* and not a political measure, rejecting criticism that it is an attempt to weaken organizations critical of the government. For their part, organizations such as Amnesty International considered that this action jeopardizes the operation of civil society and weakens democracy by affecting its capacity for funding and action.

In April, the Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA) reported that Mexico registered 135 attacks and ten murders of environmental and land defenders in 2025. Furthermore, the organization warned that the State itself remains primarily responsible for attacks against those who protect the natural environment.



Infographic created with AI assistance - NotebookLM © SIPAZ

Presentation of the report "Structures of silence: censorship, opacity and surveillance" © ARTICULO 19

## LATEST

As regards journalists, in May, Article 19, a freedom of expression organization, presented its annual report, *"Structures of Silence: Censorship, Opacity, and Surveillance."* In Mexico, considered the deadliest country for the press in the region, one journalist disappeared and seven were murdered in 2025. The organization also documented 451 attacks against the press in the country: one every 20 hours. The report questioned new laws promoted by the government of Claudia Sheinbaum, such as the *"National Guard Law,"* which would allow the military to access personal data without sufficient controls, reinforcing militariza-

tion and the use of technology as a surveillance mechanism.

### **Land, Territory, and Natural Resources: Other Demands from Civil Society Organizations**

In February, a federal court ordered the suspension of construction on Section 5 of the Maya Train, determining the existence of environmental damage and non-compliance with mandatory environmental impact assessments. The court ruled that construction must remain halted until the environmental reviews required by law are properly carried out and completed.

It is worth recalling that the Maya Train, a flagship project of former President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, was announced in 2018. Since then, organizations and communities have documented significant socio-environmental risks and impacts, including the deforestation of more than 11,000 hectares, the fragmentation of ecosystems, the drilling and destruction of cenotes and caverns, the alteration of wetlands, aquifer contamination, and the loss of habitat for emblematic fauna. They point out that, to date, no effective mitigation measures have been implemented. They have also documented an increase in criminal and institutional



Maya Train  
Station,  
May 2026  
© SIPAZ

violence in areas that previously had low crime rates, despite the increased military presence on the Peninsula.

In February, following statements by Claudia Sheinbaum, the debate on fracking intensified. What was completely rejected during the election campaign now appears as a real option for obtaining unconventional gas and strengthening the country's energy independence, as it imports almost three-quarters of its natural gas from the United States. The *"Mexican Alliance Against Fracking"* described the shift as a betrayal of campaign promises and warned that there is no scientifically proven way to conduct fracking in an environmentally friendly manner.

In May, three years after the comprehensive reform of the mining legal framework, the collective *"¡Cambiémosla Ya!"* (Let's Change It Now!) accused the Ministry of Economy and SEMARNAT (the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources) of delaying the issuance of the regulations essential for the full implementation of mining legislation. Although the reform approved in 2023 meant progress in the protection of communities, workers and the environment, the absence of secondary regulations—which should have been published since October of that same year—has prevented the authorities from

canceling concessions even in situations related to worker deaths, alleged links with organized crime and irreversible environmental damage.

### **Forced Displacement: An Ongoing Problem in Large Parts of the Country**

In May, the report *"Forced Journeys: Internal Displacement in Mexico 2025"* by the Ibero-American University was published, documenting that at least 15,795 people were forced to leave their places of origin that year in 73 separate incidents across 11 states. The research revealed that 83% of displacement cases were associated with organized crime. Sinaloa had the highest percentage of incidents, with 39.2%, followed by Chihuahua with 28.4% and Michoacan with 21.3%. However, the phenomenon is present in eleven states of the country, which is equivalent to a third of the national territory.

The report warns of the increased use of explosives, drones, and antipersonnel mines, which have heightened the danger to affected communities and worsened the living conditions of families, many of whom are forced to flee their homes suddenly due to direct threats or armed clashes. While acknowledging the inclusion of a question on forced displacement in the 2025 Intercensal Survey by

INEGI (the National Institute of Statistics and Geography) as progress, the report concludes that the legal framework remains insufficient. It emphasizes the urgent need to create a comprehensive law on the matter and to establish a coordinated national registry to guarantee full reparations for victims.

### **Women: Regulatory Advances, Limited Effective Implementation**

In February, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem, told the Senate that Mexico must strengthen public policies, institutions, and budgets dedicated to protecting women and girls. She acknowledged legislative progress on equality but warned that laws are insufficient without resources, effective implementation mechanisms, and genuine follow-up.

In April, another regulatory advance occurred when the Senate approved an initiative promoted by President Claudia Sheinbaum to enact a *"General Law on Femicide"* that would standardize this crime throughout the country. The proposal seeks to unify criteria, sanctions, and investigation procedures, as well as strengthen coordination among authorities and guarantee access to justice and reparations for victims. It



Presentation of the new report by El Obse, an observatory of attacks against human rights defenders and journalists, San Cristóbal de las Casas, March 2026  
© SIPAZ

arises from current inconsistencies in the legal definition of femicide among the states, which has generated legal inequality and difficulties in the administration of justice. However, feminist organizations such as *"Las Constituyentes MX"* (The MX Constituents) questioned the lack of updated data on Mexico, the minimization of impunity, and the absence of an intersectional approach for Indigenous, migrant, or disabled women. They also criticized the exclusion of victims'

families, the insufficient attention to comprehensive reparations, and the lack of analysis of mechanisms such as *"Gender Violence Alerts."*

### **CHIAPAS: Persistent Violence and Human Rights Violations**

Chiapas continues to be one of the states facing the greatest challenges in terms of human rights. Human rights groups and centers have denounced the increase in disappearances, forced recruitment,

internal displacement, and the presence of criminal groups. They also point to the expansion of militarization and the constant risk to human rights defenders and Indigenous communities.

Regarding organized crime, an alleged payroll attributed to the recently killed Nemesio Ruben Oseguera Cervantes, alias "El Mencho"—also known as *"The Lord of the Roosters"*—leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), was published by the newspaper *"El Univer-*

sal." It outlines that his operations in Chiapas cost him almost 2,000,000 pesos per week, with more than 300 hitmen receiving salaries of between 2,000 and 10,000 pesos per week. What has generated the most controversy is that the list also includes the "Pakal Immediate Reaction Force" (FRIP), created in 2024 by the governor of Chiapas, Eduardo Ramírez Aguilar: a special state force with high-powered weaponry intended to combat the cartels vying for control in the state. Municipal police forces from several cities also appear on the list. Governor Eduardo Ramirez announced a thorough investigation to "punish with the full force of the law whoever is responsible."

In March, in a case that calls into question the actions of the FRIP, the Fray Bartolome de Las Casas Human Rights Center (Frayba) presented the case of Oscar Trinidad Carbajal, detained in November 2025 and allegedly tortured by members of the "Pakal" group. Frayba stated that the case is part of a pattern of violations in Chiapas that includes arbitrary detentions, torture, and abuses during arrest, with possible responsibility on the part of the state Attorney General's Office and security forces. Given the lack of progress in the investigations, the case was taken to international bodies. The family demands

his release and the clarification of the facts, in addition to denouncing harassment.

In April, an armed attack occurred in the municipality of Nicolas Ruiz. Two men were killed, several people were injured, and one remains missing. The organized community of Nicolas Ruiz denounced that the attackers were members of organized crime groups, stating that the authorities know who is responsible. Since 2025, several communities have formed an alliance and established community guards due to the lack of action by the State or its possible complicity in the violence. The community demands the safe return

of the missing man, justice for the victims, a genuine investigation that punishes those responsible, and respect for their autonomy as an Indigenous community. In the same context, in the nearby municipality of Venustiano Carranza, a confrontation also took place between alleged drug traffickers and members of the "Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization" (OCEZ), known as the "People's House."

The issue of disappearances is taking center stage. In April, skeletal remains were located near San Fernando and Berriozabal. The discovery was made possible by an anonymous tip and was carried out by the "Searching

Activities of mothers searching for their missing children in the context of Mother's Day, San Cristóbal de las Casas, May 2026  
© SIPAZ





Conversation  
 "Yes to life! No to  
 dispossession!"  
 on the  
 Palenque-San  
 Cristóbal de las  
 Casas highway,  
 February 2026  
 © SIPAZ

*Mothers" collective of Chiapas, in coordination with authorities. Berriozabal is a particularly affected area, considered a hotspot due to the high number of disappearances, mainly of young people. "They feign peace, but the disappearances continue. It has been the same government and the same Attorney General's Office that take them and make them disappear," stated the "Searching Mothers" collective of Chiapas.*

On Mother's Day, activities were held in various cities, including Tuxtla Gutierrez

and San Cristobal de Las Casas. Family members accused federal and state authorities of downplaying the disappearance crisis and fostering impunity. The groups maintained that they have documented the increase in disappearances in Chiapas for several administrations and attributed this situation to territorial disputes between criminal groups, as well as government tolerance and acquiescence.

In March, "El Obse," an observatory of attacks against

human rights defenders and journalists, presented its third report to highlight the violence and insecurity faced by those who carry out this work in the state. It pointed out limitations in the processes of investigating and prosecuting attacks. While the Chiapas government presents an overview of improved state security, highlighting progress in stabilization and a reduction in certain violence indicators, "El Obse" suggests that, although some visible expressions of violence have

decreased, this does not imply their disappearance, but rather a transformation in their forms. Instead of open confrontations, dynamics of intimidation and territorial control are observed more frequently.

This same month, the Fray Matias de Cordova Human Rights Center in Tapachula reported two raids in less than 72 hours, which it considered acts of aggression and intimidation against its work, despite having federal protection measures in place. The center pointed to negligence

on the part of the authorities, as no effective measures were activated after the first report, allowing the attack to be repeated. Various civil society organizations and the UN Special Rapporteur, Mary Lawlor, called on the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation, noting that these types of attacks have not been adequately investigated in Chiapas.

## Land, Territory, and Environmental Defense at the Heart of Demands

In February, the forum *“Yes to Life! No to Dispossession!”* was held in San Cristobal de Las Casas. During the meeting, residents of Chilon and other municipalities affected by the construction of the San Cristobal-Palenque highway, members of the Movement for the Defense of Life and Territory (MODEVITE), as well as human rights organizations and environmental defenders, reiterated their opposition to



Encounter *“The Storm Inside and Out According to the Zapatista Communities and Peoples”*, San Cristóbal de las Casas, April 2026  
© SIPAZ

the project, which they stated is being built “without complying with the minimum legal requirements, without sufficient

dance with the rights of Indigenous peoples.” In the days prior, the organizations conducted an observation mission in the

the interests of the most powerful.” “The poor will get poorer and the rich will get richer,” stated a member of MODE-

VITE. “We know that behind the facade of tourism, there is the dispossession of our territory, which is not just our plot of land, but also the way we live,” she added. Another element documented is that the government is imposing this infrastructure through harassment, conditioning the delivery of social programs like “Sembrando Vida” (Sowing Life), threats to deploy the FRIP elite force, and various other forms of manipulation.

In April, the “The Storm Inside and Out According to the Zapatista Communities and Peoples” Seedbed was held in San Cristobal de Las Casas. The gathering focused on the Zapatista concept of “the storm,” which describes the current global crisis caused by capitalism. During the seedbed, Captain Marcos maintained that social movements can only resist if they have



Encounter “The Storm Inside and Out According to the Zapatista Communities and Peoples”, San Cristóbal de las Casas, April 2026 © SIPAZ

environmental, social, and cultural information, nor adequate technical information, and without a free, prior, and informed consultation in accor-

area; they confirmed that the highway will have a significant environmental impact. “The misnamed Highway of Cultures is an extractive project built on

clarity about their history, objectives, and organization. He rejected the idea of “unconditional unity,” proposing instead a diversity of struggles

with a common goal. He argued that the nation-state has lost real power in the face of capitalism, and that current conflicts and wars primarily benefit large economic interests. Moises, for his part, presented the Zapatista collective vision on the climate crisis. He warned that without confronting environmental destruction, there will be no

conditions for life in the future. Furthermore, they addressed problems in Indigenous communities: migration and poverty are causing land loss and the concentration of property ownership, weakening communal structures. Finally, Marcos announced a future meeting in August ■

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Your contribution enables SIPAZ to continue providing international observation and accompaniment in southern Mexico.



### In North America:

SIPAZ, INC.  
3849 17th Ave S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55407, USA  
E-mail: [info\\_sz@sipaz.org](mailto:info_sz@sipaz.org)  
Tel.: (+1.530)-892-0662

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# Chiapas

## «Pending Peace»

### Presentation of Joint Report Documenting Disappearances and Forced Displacement despite Pacification Narrative in Chiapas

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, the “Border Region Working Group” (GTRF), a network of civil society organizations of which SIPAZ is a member, publicly presented the report “Chiapas, Pending Peace,” an analysis of the situation of violence and human rights in the Sierra Frontera region of Chiapas during 2025.

The report states that this region continued to face a crisis of violence marked by forced disappearances and internal displacement, mainly linked to the territorial control exercised by organized crime groups in the area. It affirms that, although the state government reinforced the police and military presence under a discourse of “pacification,” the actions implemented failed to completely stop the violence, guarantee security and justice for the affected communities, or dismantle the criminal structures. On the contrary, the document points out *“that complaints about human rights violations, institutional omissions and lack of coordination in investigations persist, while the official discourse continues to maintain a narrative of ‘pacification’ and ‘zero impunity’.”* ■

## Persistent Violence: “Institutional Cynicism and Hidden Violence”

The report emphasizes that, during 2025, official data in Chiapas reported a significant decrease in crime rates and some types of violence. Statistics indicated a 62.8% reduction compared to 2024, as well as a decrease in the incidence of crimes related to property, life, and other legally protected rights. These results were used by the state government to support a narrative of restored peace and strengthened rule of law. In his first report, the governor claimed to have restored security and calm to the state, while the Secretariat of Public Security highlighted that Chiapas was among the states with the lowest incidence of high-impact crimes in the country.

However, behind these figures, serious forms of violence persisted that were not fully reflected in the official indicators, the report states. During 2025, clandestine graves containing dozens of bodies were discovered, hundreds of people were forcibly displaced, and more than a thousand people disappeared. Complaints against security forces and criticism from victims' families continued, with reports pointing to institutional cover-ups, a lack of genuine investigations, and the absence of effective search efforts.

The statistical reduction in certain crimes does not necessarily represent an improvement in security conditions, as high-impact phenomena such as enforced disappearances, internal displacement, and the discovery of clandestine graves persist. These events particularly affect territories controlled by organized crime groups, where mechanisms of surveillance, intimidation, and social control remain in place, the report concludes.

*“The statistical reduction in certain crimes does not necessarily represent an improvement in secu-*

*urity conditions, as high-impact phenomena such as enforced disappearances, internal displacement, and the discovery of clandestine graves persist.”*

The situation is especially serious in border regions and areas of high human mobility, where migration, extractive economies, and the presence of criminal groups converge. In these territories, migrants and local residents are victims of extortion, arbitrary detentions, disappearances, and systematic violence.

*“The statistical reduction in certain crimes does not necessarily represent an improvement in security conditions, as high-impact phenomena such as enforced disappearances, internal displacement, and the discovery of clandestine graves persist.”*

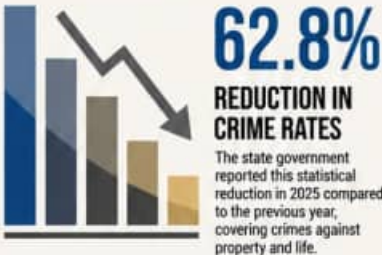
## Disappearances: “A Growing Tool of Terror”

Between December 2024 and December 2025, more than four thousand people were officially registered as disappeared in Chiapas. Enforced disappearance remained a recurring practice in the border region, where more than ten percent of the cases registered in the state occurred. Civil organizations and community testimonies maintain that the real figures are higher due to under-reporting caused by fear of reporting, threats from criminal groups, and distrust of the authorities.

The testimonies and data collected show that these disappearances are often selectively targeted against people linked, voluntarily or by force, to rival organized crime groups, as well as against families or community leaders considered obstacles to territorial control. Temporary disappearances used as punishment, intimidation, or a mechanism of psycho-

# CHIAPAS: THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE DISCOURSE OF PACIFICATION AND TERRITORIAL REALITY (2025)

## THE OFFICIAL NARRATIVE (SECURITY DISCOURSE)



## THE DOCUMENTED REALITY (TERRITORIAL DATA)



### RESTORATION OF SECURITY AND TRANQUILITY

Words from Governor Eduardo Ramirez in his first report, stating that Chiapas ranks among the states with the lowest incidence of high-impact crimes.



### "ZERO IMPUNITY" STRATEGY

Based on the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force (FRIP) and police visibility operations to project governability.

### FOCUS OF ATTENTION: THE MECHANISM OF TERROR

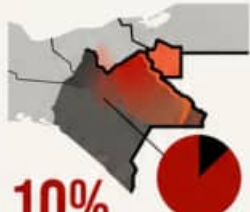


### SELECTIVE DISAPPEARANCES AS A CONTROL TOOL

Used against community leaders or people linked to rival groups to remove obstacles to criminal territorial dominance.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GOAL OF TEMPORARY DISAPPEARANCE

It is used as a mechanism of punishment and intimidation to instill a state of constant surveillance and social control over the civilian population.



### 10% OF DISAPPEARANCES OCCUR IN THE BORDER AREA

The Sierra Frontera region is the epicenter of the crisis, directly linked to territorial disputes among criminal groups.



### DISCOVERY OF MASS GRAVES AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Dozens of bodies and hundreds of displaced people were documented due to threats, extortion, and forced recruitment.

### COMPARISON OF KEY INDICATORS (GTRF REPORT)

INDICATOR	OFFICIAL DATA / DISCOURSE	TERRITORIAL REALITY
CRIME RATES:	Reduction of 62.8%	Persistence of mass graves and hidden violence
DISAPPEARANCES:	Sometimes classified as "voluntary absences"	More than 4,000 cases (Dec 2024 - Dec 2025)
BORDER SECURITY:	FRIP force operators	Criminal control of prices, routes, and resources (water)
SOCIAL PEACE:	"Pacification" and "Zero Impunity"	Forced displacement and mechanisms of terror

Presentation of the GTRF report, San Cristóbal de las Casas, May 2026 © GTRF

**PRESENTACIÓN**

**Chiapas, la Paz pendiente**  
Informe 2025 del Grupo de Trabajo Región Frontera

**PRESENTAN**

**Emanuel Bran-Guzmán**  
Defensor de Derechos Humanos, psicólogo y sociólogo

**Carla Zamora Lomeli**  
Socióloga y Doctora en Ciencia Social con especialidad en Sociología por el Colegio de México

**Mariana Morales**  
Periodista de investigación

**Damián Sánchez**  
Periodista de investigación

**MODERA**

**Pedro Faro**  
Defensor de Derechos Humanos

**SÁBADO 30 DE MAYO 17:00 hrs.**

**Sendas**  
Calle Ma. Adelina Flores 50, Col. Centro San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas.

**CONVOCAN:** [Logos of various organizations]

**CON EL ACOMPAÑAMIENTO INTERNACIONAL DE:** [Logos of SWE FOR and SIPaz]

In addition to the direct impact on the victims, these actions have profound effects on families and communities, especially among children, women, the elderly, and migrants. Various testimonies indicate that many disappearances occurred with the knowledge, tolerance, or inaction of municipal and state police forces, thus deepening impunity. This is compounded by a lack of coordination between prosecutors' offices, forensic institutions, and search agencies, as well as practices of revictimization and the concealment of information.

Many families have resorted to both formal complaints and social media and news outlets to demand the search for their relatives, given the lack of effective responses from institutions. However, many face threats, extortion, and criminalization. Some testimonies even indicate that, after a disappearance, families are forced to abandon their homes and properties, which then fall under the control of criminal groups or are appropriated by third parties.

logical control were also documented. The victims include migrants, women, the elderly, traders, and farmers, demonstrating that the violence affects various social sectors.

*“Temporary disappearances used as punishment, intimidation, or a mechanism of psychological control were also documented.”*

*“Temporary disappearances used as punishment, intimidation, or a mechanism of psychological control were also documented.”*

**Forced Displacement in Chiapas: Another Unresolved Problem**

Meanwhile, internal forced displacement has become a prolonged and structural crisis, the report documents. Although some families have returned to their communities, they do so under conditions of insecurity and constant threats, leading to intermittent displacement and persistent vulnerability. Violence perpetrated by armed groups linked to illicit economies remains the primary cause of the expulsion of individuals and communities through threats, extortion, forced recruitment, and direct attacks.

The government's response to displacement has been limited and predominantly focused on security measures and temporary human-



itarian aid, without addressing the root causes of the problem, the report concludes. Despite Chiapas having a legal framework on forced displacement since 2012, it has not been fully regulated or implemented. Furthermore, comprehensive public policies have not been developed to guarantee protection, safe return, reparations, or access to justice for displaced persons.

*“The government’s response to displacement has been limited and predominantly focused on security measures and temporary humanitarian aid, without addressing the root causes of the problem.”*

The testimonies gathered also reveal a daily context of violence and social control characterized by extortion, restrictions on movement, threats, and the constant presence of armed men. This situa-

tion has severely damaged the social and economic fabric of the region, affecting productive activities, community life, and trust among neighbors. Many people perceive that the authorities are either unable—or unwilling—to curb the spread of crime, while some security forces are accused of abuses and violations against the civilian population.

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*“The government’s response to displacement has been limited and predominantly focused on security measures and temporary humanitarian aid, without addressing the root causes of the problem.”*

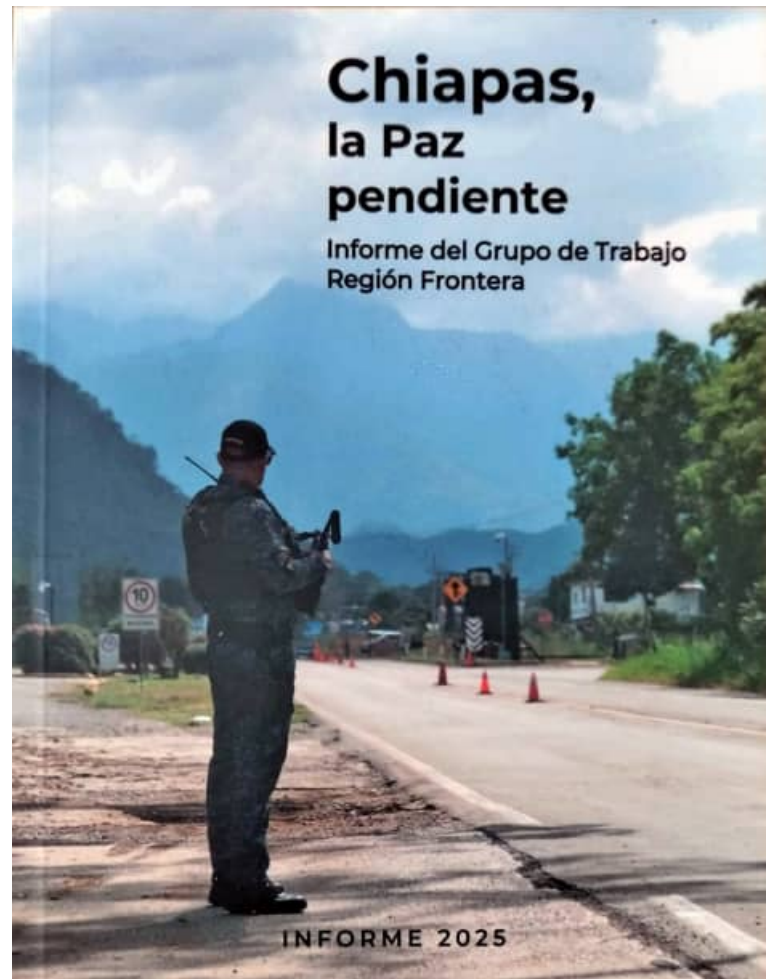
## Pacification in Dispute - State-Led Pacification: Design, Deployment, and Narrative

The report recalls that on December 8th, 2024, Eduardo Ramirez Aguilar (ERA) assumed the governorship of Chiapas with a discourse centered on the “*pacification*” of the state and a frontal assault on organized crime. As the main pillar of his strategy, he presented the “*Pakal Immediate Reaction Force*” (FRIP), comprised of specialized personnel and conceived as a rapid deployment unit. Under the slogan “*Zero Impunity*,” the new government opted for a security policy based on operations, police presence, and the strengthening of surveillance and intelligence capabilities.

The main security positions were filled by officials with experience in operational strategies against organized crime. Among them are Oscar Aparicio Avendaño, with experience in Zacatecas and training in police intelligence, and Jorge Luis Llaven Abarca, appointed attorney general of the state, despite previous allegations of abuse of power and human rights violations. This configuration revealed a strategy focused primarily on territorial control and operational reaction, rather than on in-depth investigations into the economic and political structures of organized crime.

Simultaneously, the government promoted legal reforms that expanded the powers of the “*People’s Security Secretariat*” and consolidated the FRIP as a central component of security policy. These reforms strengthened intelligence, surveillance, and preventative investigation capabilities, altering the traditional balance between police and prosecutorial functions.

During 2025, the FRIP conducted numerous operations in coordination with the State Attorney General’s Office, the National Guard, and the Mexican Army. These actions were widely publicized in official media, showcasing



arrests, seizures of weapons and drugs, and police deployments. However, many of these arrests involved minor offenses or low-level operatives, while subsequent legal proceedings remained unclear, with little public information available regarding sentences or concluded investigations.

Although the government presented these results as evidence of restored peace and reduced violence, serious problems persisted, such as forced disappearances, internal displacement, and increasing reports of abuses committed by security forces. The FRIP was accused of alleged human rights violations, including cases of abuse of power and excessive use of force, by civil society organizations and the general population.

Furthermore, the government strategy included “*peace*” and “*reconciliation*” initiatives

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cover  
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in conflict-ridden municipalities, although in many cases these functioned more as mechanisms for political coordination and legitimizing operations than as genuine processes for building community peace.

*“Rather than prioritizing the transformation of the structural conditions that sustain violence, the strategy prioritizes a visible state presence, rapid response to local crises, and the recovery of control in contested areas. While this approach has strengthened the capacity for immediate intervention and contributed to institutional perceptions of greater governability, the available information is limited for assessing the extent to which these interventions have led to the sustained dismantling of criminal structures,”* the report states.

*“The predominance of indicators focused on operations and arrests, along with the limited public traceability of judicial processes and their outcomes, suggests a persistent gap between the operational containment of violence and the structural weakening of criminal networks,”* it concludes.

*“The predominance of indicators focused on operations and arrests, (...) suggests a persistent gap between the operational containment of violence and the structural weakening of criminal networks.”*

### **Peacemaking from the Ground Up: Local Experiences and Reinterpretations**

The decrease in armed clashes in the Sierra Frontera region of Chiapas, observed after the change of government, has not meant the end of territorial control exercised by criminal

*“The predominance of indicators focused on operations and arrests, (...) suggests a persistent gap between the operational containment of violence and the structural weakening of criminal networks.”*

groups, according to various testimonies gathered in the report. They agree that, although checkpoints, roadblocks, and visible confrontations have decreased, a constant sense of fear and insecurity persists. Residents of municipalities such as Chicomuselo and Frontera Comalapa indicate that *“true peace”* has not arrived, as armed groups continue to be present and regulate community life, albeit now in less visible forms or through the dominance of a single criminal group.

*“This distinction, between a decrease in clashes and the persistence of control, is central to understanding the gap between the official narrative of peacemaking and the daily experience of the communities,”* the report states. The population acknowledges a relative *“stabilization”* of the territory, but this is attributed more to a realignment among criminal organizations than to a genuine dismantling of their structures and the prosecution of their members. In some places, participation in roadblocks is no longer openly enforced, but forced recruitment to guard roads or protect strategic points continues. Therefore, the reduction in visible violence does not translate into a full restoration of security or a decrease in armed control over the communities.

*“This distinction, between a decrease in clashes and the persistence of control, is central to understanding the gap between the official narrative of peacemaking and the daily experience of the communities.”*

*“This distinction, between a decrease in clashes and the persistence of control, is central to understanding the gap between the official narrative of peacemaking and the daily experience of the communities.”*

Another key aspect is the criminal groups' dominance over the local economy. *“Control of prices, buyers, marketing routes, and strategic resources such as water implies a form of territorial power that is not limited to armed coercion, but rather structures daily economic life,”* the report details.

In this context, the presence of the *“Pakal Immediate Reaction Force”* (FRIP) did not generate a widespread perception of protection. On the contrary, several testimonies describe this group as a new armed actor that operates with intimidation and arrogance. Some people believe that the actions of the FRIP (Popular Revolutionary Front) primarily affect the civilian population, while criminal structures remain untouched. There are even perceptions of possible tolerance or indirect coordination between security forces and criminal groups, which deepens public distrust of the authorities,” the report states.

Lack of institutional trust is one of the most frequently recurring themes in the testimonies. Many people do not report crimes for fear of reprisals or because they believe the authorities do not investigate or guarantee justice. *“In contexts where fear of reprisals and the perception of impunity are high, violence tends to remain under-reported, which limits the possibilities for judicial investigation and effective access to justice,”* the report states.

The conflict has also brought about profound social and cultural transformations. Silence and self-censorship have become survival mechanisms. The report explains that these phenomena are not solely a response to fear of direct reprisals, but also to broader processes of social adaptation to violence, in which silence becomes a daily practice in order to continue living in contexts perceived as unsafe. Taken together, these dynamics produce a triple effect: they reproduce fear in daily life; they hinder the processes of reporting and demanding justice; and they ultimately reinforce the official narrative of pacification.

In general, a large part of the population perceives that the so-called *“pacification”* pro-

moted by the state government is more of a media and political strategy than a real transformation of the conditions of violence. Although the government publicizes operations, arrests, and security campaigns, many residents believe that the announced peace does not exist in practice. For the communities, violence continues in new forms, and criminal control remains, revealing a profound gap between the official discourse and the daily experience of those who live in the Sierra Frontera Region.

### Hopes from the Peoples

In recent years, the change of ruling party generated expectations of change for the people; however, many believe that these promises were not kept and that violence and insecurity continue to severely affect communities. Although at the beginning of 2025 there was hope for real change in Chiapas, for a large part of the population, government actions have been perceived as a *“sham.”*

Faced with this context, communities have turned to collective memory and their history of struggle and organization to strengthen their resistance. They recognize the importance of recovering community experiences that for years allowed them to achieve common benefits and avoid the deceptions of political parties. At the same time, reflections are emerging on the need to transform forms of governance and promote an education based on community values, solidarity, and the strengthening of family and community relationships.

Protection and care strategies in the face of violence have incorporated lessons from previous organizing processes. This has allowed them to maintain support networks, strengthen trust among people, and create spaces to express needs, acknowledge fear, and ask for help. A strong sense of belonging to family and community helped many people endure the most difficult times and remain in their territories.

Spirituality has also been a source of strength and hope. Religious individuals stayed in the communities, providing humanitarian aid and support, becoming ethical role models for those facing extreme situations. Likewise, sharing information and collectively analyzing the violence allowed for the development of strategies to continue daily life prudently, avoiding reprisals while maintaining community support.

During the most violent periods, communication methods changed. Due to the risks of speaking publicly, dialogue became more discreet and personalized, between trusted individuals and in everyday settings. The education and example set by children and young people have also become increasingly important, as many families believe this will influence their decision to remain in the region or seek a future elsewhere.

Despite differing perceptions of the present, many people maintain hope for building a different future. Through small changes in daily and family life, they seek to rebuild the social fabric and strengthen community organization. For these communities, regaining unity, understanding their rights, and working collectively are fundamental steps to restoring peace and building better living conditions for future generations.

*“For these communities, regaining unity, understanding their rights, and working collectively are fundamental steps to restoring peace and building better living conditions for future generations.”*

*“The interdependent social relationships that have been maintained in various spaces such as churches, communal lands, communities, and families over time allow them to confront violence in different ways and also provide a horizon for future life plans based on community*

*values such as respect for life and a critical awareness of the current political system that enabled the recent violence in the region. Given this, the focus for the future is on working with young people and children to form generations capable of valuing and working for the community for the common good. This represents a great challenge, but at the same time, it is essential,”* the report states ■

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*“For these communities, regaining unity, understanding their rights, and working collectively are fundamental steps to restoring peace and building better living conditions for future generations.”*



# International Accompaniment

## A Tool that Remains Valid despite Contextual Changes



*“People from different parts of the world arrived, putting their bodies to stop the violence and using documentation as tools. There the languages dressed in all colors. With their presence and with their denunciation, they diluted the military and paramilitary attacks in different regions of Chiapas. Solidarity fueled resistance, with it it illuminated the dark paths of violence and war.”*

**“When solidarity is present, 25 years of BriCOs”, Fray Bartolome de Las Casas Center for Human Rights, 2020**

**A**lthough the quote with which we opened this article refers to the project of the Civil Peace Camps (CCP) and later the Civil Peace Brigades (BriCOs) developed by the Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ) and by the Fray Bartolome de Las Casas Center for Human Rights (Frayba) in Chiapas after the uprising of the

Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in 1994, it also refers to the backbone of what a year later was to become the International Service for Peace (SIPAZ): international accompaniment.

SIPAZ consolidated its presence by resorting to the main foundations of what this form of civil peace intervention implies, which had already been used in war contexts in countries such as Guatemala and Colombia: people from other countries who, in an act of solidarity, are present in the places and moments of greatest tension to stop violence (deterrent effect), combining this strategy with the production and dissemination of information to the public and key actors to enhance national and international solidarity (the “boomerang” effect, generating rebound actions).

To deepen the reflection on International Accompaniment, we conducted an interview with the Swedish Movement for Reconciliation (SweFOR), an organization also present in Chiapas since 2000. In it, it ratified its conviction that the presence of people or international organizations in communities and territories of Chiapas that face situations of violence, conflict or violation of human rights has managed



to provide protection to social leaders, human rights defenders and communities at risk through an unarmed presence. SweFOR stated: “boomerang” SweFOR noted in SIPAZ’s achievements that its prolonged presence on the ground has allowed it to “build relationships of trust for years with many actors”, something that it considers “extremely important when you work with issues as delicate as risk and human rights violations with people who have suffered violence for their activism.”

SweFOR also noted that SIPAZ’s main contribution, beyond its physical and protective presence, has been its ability to gather and disseminate information over time: “SIPAZ has

managed to bring information about what is happening in Chiapas and Mexico to a more global context. In this way, communities have a channel that allows them to make the human rights situation in their territories visible. The SIPAZ website is like a very rich and extensive historical database. It offers a gateway to the very memory of the struggle for human rights in Mexico.”

Generally, international observers tend to act as impartial observers, facilitating spaces for dialogue and contributing to the peaceful resolution of disputes. “An international player like SIPAZ can function as a bridge, as an external player that can be trusted, since it has no political

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Accompaniment,  
SIPAZ-SweFOR,  
2023  
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*"International accompaniment is a tool and a hope for people and communities that find themselves in situations of injustice or risk."*

or economic interest in the conflicts taking place. It is an player that can play a very important role in rebuilding trust and contributing to strengthening the social fabric," SweFOR acknowledged.

SweFOR noted, however, that in recent years the international accompaniment model faces new challenges. One of these is the limitation of economic and human resources, since many organizations depend on external funding and volunteer staff.

*"The SIPAZ website is like a very rich and extensive historical database. It offers a gateway to the very memory of the struggle for human rights in Mexico."*

Furthermore, while the presence of international observers has helped deter acts of violence due to the attention they generate among governments, international organizations, and public opinion, the impact has been limited when there is no political will on the part of the authorities to address the reported problems. Nevertheless, although formal influence is limited, a certain level of visibility has been maintained, which means that "state players have been forced to act in one way or another, to acknowledge the problems," SweFOR observed.

*"An international player like SIPAZ can function as a bridge, as an external player that can be trusted. (...) It is an player that can play a very important role in rebuilding trust and contributing to strengthening the social fabric."*

This is also occurring in a global context where human rights violations are increasingly considered "collateral damage," and the international mechanisms responsible for enforcing the human rights framework (United Nations or Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) are facing their own crises and limitations. "It is worrying that the entire system or structure for the protection and defense of human rights is weakening," SweFOR acknowledged.

Likewise, there are risks to the safety of the accompaniers themselves, especially in contexts where armed groups such as organized crime persist, whose presence has grown in Chiapas in recent years. "It's very complex to understand everyone's interests, and who is connected to whom among authorities, more local armed groups, and large organized crime groups. It's complex, as an accompanier or an accompaniment organization, to know where we can and cannot move. These actors also want to operate without international oversight. Perhaps the political cost doesn't matter to them as much as it does to an authority, but international accompaniment still has a very important role to play in documenting and making visible," SweFOR concluded.

The field of international accompaniment has been evolving to respond to changing contexts. "Here in Chiapas, we have had to be flexible because the context has been changing over the last 30 years, from the Zapatista uprising to the present day, both politically and with the violence

associated with organized crime,” SweFOR shared.

As accompanying organizations, “we have

“It is worrying that the entire system or structure for the protection and defense of human rights is weakening.”

developed a more comprehensive approach to accompaniment, one that not only uses the physical presence of an observer in a vest on the ground, but also incorporates other tools such as information dissemination, analytical tools, and, in the case of SIPAZ, methodologies for the positive transformation of conflicts. We have managed to work together with the local organizations we support to bring very important issues to light and open up civic space in very complicated places and times,” SweFOR reflected.

In the 2020 Frayba book mentioned at the beginning, SIPAZ itself shared that “the response of civil society, expressed in national and interna-

tional accompaniment, continues to enable the coordination of solidarity actions, increasing their reach and fostering a growing logic of exchange that goes beyond limiting direct violence against organized local processes. (...) [an exchange where] the points to question or (re)construct transcend a specific geography to take us to the heart of what concepts like humanity and dignity mean.” Six years after the publication of this book, these points

remain crucial for our future in an increasingly turbulent and violent world ■

“The points to question or (re)construct transcend a specific geography to take us to the heart of what concepts like humanity and dignity mean.”



# SIPAZ Activities

(Mid-February  
to Mid-May 2026)



## INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AND ACCOMPANIMENT

### CHIAPAS

#### FEBRUARY

- ▼ We attended the presentation of the book *“Chicomuselo: The Struggle for Life and Territory,”* a systematization that documents the organization and resistance process that the inhabitants of that municipality have carried out for more than two decades to stop mining in their territories.
- ▼ We attended the forum *“Yes to Life! No to Dispossession!”* held in San Cristobal de Las Casas. During this forum, residents of Chilón and other municipalities in the northern part of the

state affected by the construction of the San Cristóbal-Palenque highway, members of the Movement for the Defense of Life and Territory (MODEVITE), as well as human rights organizations and environmental defenders, reiterated their opposition to the project after conducting a Civil Observation Mission in the construction zone.

#### MARCH

- ▼ We accompanied the Searching Mothers to a meeting with the Bishop of the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas, Monsignor Rodrigo Aguilar Martinez.
- ▼ We participated in several activities held in San Cristobal de Las Casas in [commemoration of](#)

[International Women's Day.](#)

- ▼ We were present as observers at the press conference in Tuxtla Gutierrez where the Fray Bartolome de Las Casas Human Rights Center (Frayba) publicly presented the [case of Oscar Trinidad Carbajal](#), who was arrested without cause in November 2025 and tortured by security agents, particularly the Pakal Immediate Reaction Force (FRIP).
- ▼ We attended the public presentation of [the third report by “El Obse,”](#) an observatory of attacks against human rights defenders and journalists that seeks to highlight the violence and insecurity faced by members of these sec-



tors for their work in Chiapas.

- ▼ We were present at the event that marked the opening of an office of the Selva Negra Human Rights Center in Rayon.

#### APRIL

- ▼ We attended several sessions of the [\*"The Storm Inside and Out According to the Zapatista Communities and Peoples"\*](#) Seedbed, convened by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), which took place in San Cristobal de Las Casas.

#### MAY

- ▼ We attended the quarterly assembly of Believing People of the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas.
- ▼ We participated in a multi-sector meeting convened by the International Crisis Group (an organization dedicated to the study of conflicts, war prevention, and the design of policies to reduce their humanitarian, social, and economic consequences),

which took place in San Cristobal de Las Casas.

- ▼ We participated in the First Latin American Meeting on Popular Education in the Context of Human Mobility, held in San Cristobal de Las Casas with the participation of civil society organizations from across the continent.
- ▼ We accompanied the pilgrimage undertaken by parishioners from Chalchihuitan to demand the implementation of a dry law and to stop the sale and consumption of alcohol and drugs in the area.

- ▼ We attended the peasant gathering *"Educating Ourselves to Transform Ourselves, Transforming Ourselves to Educate Ourselves,"* at the invitation of the Tsomanotik Solidarity Center, which took place in Tzimol.

- ▼ We participated in a meeting with representatives from the pastoral zones that are part of the Monitoring Commission of the Congress of Mother Earth, a component of the Social Ministry of the Diocese

of San Cristobal de Las Casas.

- ▼ We attended the event for mothers searching for their missing children, held in San Cristobal de Las Casas as part of Mother's Day celebrations, entitled [\*"We don't want a World Cup, we want our daughters and sons back home!"\*](#)

### INFORMATION AND TRAINING FOR ACTION

### EDUCATION FOR PEACE

#### FEBRUARY

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

#### MARCH

- ▼ We held a workshop on strengthening the heart with displaced people from the Frontera region, which took place in Tuxtla Gutierrez.
- ▼ We shared an analysis of the current situation with members of the Pastoral Monitoring Commission for Mother

## SIPAZ ACTIVITIES

Earth of the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas.

- ▼ Together with other civil organizations, we facilitated a workshop on various aspects of Positive Conflict Transformation with representatives from Las Margaritas parish.
- ▼ We shared an analysis of the current situation with nearly one hundred members of the Chalchihuitan Parish Assembly.
- ▼ We shared an analysis with teenagers and young adults whose mothers participate in the Mujeres de Maíz collective and come from various municipalities in the Los Altos and Selva Norte regions.

### APRIL

- ▼ We held a workshop on security with peace and reconciliation builders at the invitation of the Commission for Community Unity and Reconciliation (CORECO).

### MAY

- ▼ We held a workshop on women's participation in society, organized by

the parish of Chalchihuitán.

### INTERNAL TRAINING

- ▼ We participated in a workshop on digital espionage facilitated by the Access Foundation.

### NETWORKING

- ▼ We attend plenary and committee meetings of the Chiapas Peace Networking (Slamalil Kinal) at least once a month.
- ▼ Every two weeks, we attend operational meetings of the People's Movement for Peace and Justice (MPPJ).
- ▼ We held meetings with organizations collaborating on the project entitled *"Strengthening the Self-Protection Capacities of Human Rights Defenders Organizations and Communities in Chiapas,"* which we coordinate with Voces Mesoamericanas, SweFOR, and Huridocs. This group published [a new report in March.](#)

- ▼ As members of the Platform for Peacebuilding in Mexico, we participate in monthly meet-

ings for analysis and reflection based on best practices.

- ▼ In February, we participated in a meeting of partners of the Global Platform for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). In May, we held a partner workshop introducing the theme of *"Climate Change, Peace, and Security."*
- ▼ In April, we participated in a meeting convened by Pax Christi International that marked the launch of a new project, *"Weavers of Hope in Times of Transition Towards a Life in Harmony,"* which will take place in Latin America.
- ▼ Also in April, we participated in an online meeting of the Peace and Human Rights Platform, which included organizations from Mexico and the European Union ■

