



SIPaz



Demonstration against the deportation policy
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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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Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Institutes

Peace and Justice Committee (Washington DC, USA)

Centro Memorial Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (La Habana, Cuba)

Christian Peacemaker Teams (Illinois, USA)

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(Florida, USA)

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Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (Massachusetts, USA)

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) (USA)

Western Dominican Province (Arizona, USA)

Witness for Peace (Washington DC, USA)

Mexico

A political agenda marked by the decrees of US President Donald Trump

Since taking office in January, US President Donald Trump has signed a host of executive orders, several of them with strong immediate or potential impacts worldwide and, in particular, in Mexico ▀

Among the most significant are measures against immigration, which included ending US citizenship by birth, as well as the suspension of the entry of unauthorized immigrants into the country through the southern border with Mexico and the disappearance of the CBP One platform, one of the last legal entry routes that remained open for those seeking asylum. Claudia Sheinbaum's government announced that Mexico is prepared. It should be remembered that it is the country with the largest number of unauthorized citizens living in the United States (an estimated four million people). The government's plan focuses on deported Mexicans, although President Sheinbaum has indicated that the country could also temporarily receive deported foreigners. Within a month of Trump taking office, 13,000 people had been deported to Mexico, worrying numbers, but similar to those of previous administrations.

Another measure that directly impacts Mexico was the decision of the United States to designate Mexican cartels as terrorist groups, considering them a risk to national security, foreign policy and the economic interests of the United States. This could expand the strategies of US intervention to the detriment of Mexico's independence as a country. It is also worth noting

that Trump has made particularly strong statements, saying, for example, that *"Mexico is largely governed by the cartels."*

Basically, he blames his neighbors for the migration crisis and the fentanyl consumption epidemic and, to force Mexico and Canada to reinforce their borders, the American president threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all their exports to the United States. The Mexican government managed to stop this possibility, at least for a month, by sending 10,000 soldiers to its northern border with the promise that they would act as a containment wall against irregular migration, fentanyl trafficking and cartels. Subsequently, the United States ended up imposing 25% tariffs on steel and aluminium on all imports from all countries, including Mexico. To date, it is not so clear whether these trade sanctions and tariff threats are hard bargaining tools or ways to increase revenues in the US.

It is worth remembering that Mexico and the United States maintain a deeply integrated, albeit asymmetric, trade relationship: in 2024, 83% of Mexican exports were destined for the US, while only a third of US imports came from Mexico (15.5%) and Canada (14.8%). The outlook is complicated and worrying, since the imposition of tariffs by the US and a possible retaliatory response from Mexico and Canada could lead to contraction in the



A protester holds the U.S. and Mexico flags during a protest in Ontario against mass deportations
© Genaro Molina, Los Angeles Times

economies of the three North American countries, inflation and massive layoffs.

Another decision with significant repercussions has been the suspension of almost all foreign cooperation programs, in particular by USAID, the largest development cooperation agency in the world. Many Mexican organizations are being directly or indirectly affected, leading some to a process of restructuring and even layoffs.

NATIONAL: Between advances and pending issues, a question of perspectives

In January, President Claudia Sheinbaum presented a report for the first 100 days of her government. She included as part of the advances *"the recognition and full rights of indigenous and Afro-Mexican peoples and communities, the right of the Mexican State to use the tracks for passenger railroads, the recovery of PEMEX and CFE as companies of the people of Mex-*



A member of the National Guard in an electoral constituency in Zapopan, Jalisco, Mexico, on April 11, 2019. May 2024
© Ulises Ruiz, AFP

ico after their long privatization, social programs for well-being, the recognition of the right to housing, it was approved that the minimum wage must always increase more than inflation, the disappearance of some autonomous organizations and so that they do not deceive, their functions remain and are improved, the strengthening of the national guard, the increase in intelligence and investigation capacities (...) and a very important and transcendent one: women are already in the Constitution with recognition of substantive equality, the right to a life free of violence and equal work, equal pay.”

The opposition parties criticized this perception. The president of the National Action Party (PAN), Jorge Romero, declared that “Mexico follows the same logic of destruction of institutions and counterweights, of polarization of society, which disdains dialogue with those who do not think like them, which fails to achieve peace and security, and that the only economic benefit it has generated is derived from giving away money to generate electoral clienteles, without really increasing the country’s economy.” On behalf of the PRI, Alejandro Moreno Cardenas stated: “In the first 100 days of the MORE-

NA government, 7,016 Mexican families have lost a loved one due to intentional homicide. This is the reflection of the #FracasoPresidencial (#Presidential-Failure) of a government without direction, incapable of guaranteeing the security of the people of Mexico.”

In November, Amnesty International (AI) published a report entitled “Changing the Paradigm. From the Militarization of Public Security to Citizen Security with a Human Rights Approach”, which documents that the number of military elements deployed rose from 48,500 in 2006 to 73,347 in 2022. In addition, the militarized National Guard has 128,000 members. AI reports that, in this same period, “at least 101,933 people have disappeared and 452,254 have been murdered, including 49,100 women, 140 journalists and 221 people defending territory, land and the environment”. It also warns that the strategy of militarizing public security “violates Mexico’s international obligations regarding human rights”. The report concludes that after almost two decades of using the Armed Forces to lead public security, the persistence of violence shows that “this strategy has failed, since not only has it not helped reduce crime and vi-

olence affecting the country, but it has created an environment conducive to members of the Armed Forces violating human rights when carrying out their activities.”

In terms of human rights, in January, the Mexican Institute for Human Rights and Democracy (IMDHD) presented the Citizen Review on Institutional Performance in the Matter of Disappearances. “As of January 27th, 2025, the number of missing persons reached 121,651, according to the National Registry of Missing and Unlocated Persons (RNPDO). The number of missing persons in Mexico continues to grow,” it reported. Seven years after the General Law on Disappearances came into effect and despite mainly legislative advances, problems remain, it stated, in particular: deficient information on the total number of missing persons; insufficient information on the number of human remains that must be identified; the non-existent capacity to identify human remains; the abandonment of the so-called “long-standing” cases; the lack of strategic plans to guide and link actions; the non-existence of a policy for preventing the disappearance of persons; the weaknesses and gaps in the training and technical preparation of the people in charge of implementing the processes of search, investigation, administration of justice, human identification, technical advice, assistance, care and reparation; the few and weak spaces for participation of victims in public policies; and the very low levels of sentences, among others.

CHIAPAS: New state government’s plan is “zero corruption, zero complicity and zero impunity”

In recent years, Chiapas has been immersed in a spiral of violence that seemed unstoppable: homicides, disappearances, human, drug and arms trafficking, forced recruitment, as well as internal forced displacement, have reached unprecedented levels. These high levels of violence have had their origin in the dispute for territorial con-

trol between several criminal groups linked mainly to the Sinaloa Cartel (CDS) and the Jalisco New generation Cartel (CJNG), particularly in the border area. In this context, analysts and civil society organizations pointed out the inability, complicity or collusion of the authorities to stop the growing insecurity.

On December 8th, 2024, the new governor Eduardo Ramirez Aguilar (ERA) took office proposing a change of strategy by launching the Pakal Immediate Reaction Force (FRIP), an elite unit destined to combat organized crime in the state. The new governor promised that *“peace will reign again on our roads”* and set himself the goal of pacifying the state in 100 days. The FRIP is made up of 500 special forces elements from the different Armed Forces of the country, trained and with special training abroad and in Mexico. In addition, the *“Pakal Group”* will have four helicopters, ten armored trucks, 200 patrol cars and two drones. Its first actions from the following day have been widely disseminated in the media and social networks with mega operations in different areas of the state, whose objective is to combat mainly three crimes: homicide, vehicle theft and extortion or protection rackets.

So far, the actions in Chiapas have yielded results, including: the reduction or disappearance of shootouts; the lifting of roadblocks; the rescue of kidnapped people; the discovery of graves; searches and confiscation of stolen cars, drugs and weapons; arrests of drug dealers, police officers and the mayors of Frontera Comalapa and Bellavista. According to official sources, crime rates have been reduced and more than 600 people have been arrested in one month of operations.

However, doubts and questions have begun to arise. From various areas it is pointed out that the leaders of the criminal groups are not being arrested. Others question the fact that legal action has not been taken against former governor Rutilio Escandon and the officials who were in charge of



public safety and the administration of justice during his term. Likewise, human rights violations have begun to be documented during operations, searches or arrests. Another question is that these security strategies have been coordinated mainly by the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) and the State Attorney General's Office (FGE), which are coordinated by controversial people.

Oscar Alberto Aparicio Avendaño, head of the SSP, has training as a sniper by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the United States; police training at the Attorney General's Office (PGR); and cartography at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). In 1999 he began his career in the PGR during a campaign against drug trafficking. In 2007 he was in the Ministerial Police of the Attorney General's Office of Chihuahua. In 2009 he joined the Federal Police and was director of Public Security in Apatzingan, Michoacan. He helped create the Immediate Reaction Force of Zacatecas (FRIZ) when he served as Undersecretary of Police Operations in this state. FRIZ has been publicly linked to criminal acts ranging from the disappearance of people to homi-

cides.

Since December, seventy civil society organizations (CSOs) have expressed their deep concern over the appointment of Jorge Luis Llaven Abarca as Attorney General of the State of Chiapas. *“The appointment of Llaven Abarca places a Prosecutor who is committed to the political and factual power groups in Chiapas, sending a clear signal that his government is not only betting on corruption and impunity, but also on practices of repression and violations of human rights,”* the CSOs denounced. Llaven Abarca was Secretary of Public Security and Citizen Protection during the government of Manuel Velasco Coello. The CSOs warned that, in this context, *“his administration was characterized by the excessive use of public force, repression of human rights defenders, arbitrary arrests and torture, acts that remain unpunished.”*

Some go further and question whether, after all, it is a *“simulated”* peace or *“pax narcotica”*. They point out the low profile of many of those arrested, the low seizure of drugs and high-powered weapons and the lack of armed opposition that criminal groups have presented to the Pakal

Propaganda on the security strategy of the new governor Eduardo Ramirez Aguilar © SIPAZ



Event "Meeting of Resistances and Rebellions" convened by the EZLN, December 2024
© SIPAZ

Group (even though they have great firepower and hundreds of members). This makes them think that there was a non-aggression pact between state forces and criminal groups prior to ERA taking office.

Social movements continue to demand change

From December 28th, 2024 to January 2nd, 2025, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) celebrated the 31st anniversary of the armed uprising. The first days of the "Encounter of Resistances and Rebellions" took place in San Cristobal de Las Casas. On December 30th, the celebration began in Oventik, municipality of San Andres Larrainzar, with a cultural program where around 3,000 people gathered. The crises caused by capitalism, its impact on indigenous peoples, and the use of organized crime to dispossess communities of their lands were addressed.

The EZLN also shared its internal evolution, moving from a hierarchical structure to a more democratic and participatory model. This process, which the Zapatistas call "the common," involves a form of community

work and the collective use of resources. The EZLN reaffirmed its commitment to building a new society free of capitalism. It warned that, although they seek peace, they are prepared to defend themselves against any attack.

In January, hundreds of Catholics from the parish of San Pedro Chenalho made a pilgrimage to this municipality to raise a series of demands. They argued that "the security promises made during the campaign by the new government (led by the MORENA member Eduardo Ramirez Aguilar), have a lot of force in the news and on social networks, but not in our reality. We understand that there are operations, searches and arrests against organized crime, but without dismantling them, these actions do not guarantee the path of justice or peace."

On January 25th, in the framework of the closing of the Jubilee Year jTatic Samuel Ruiz, thousands of Catholics from the seven pastoral zones of the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas made a pilgrimage to this city to demand, among other things, the disarmament and dismantling of criminal groups in Chiapas and justice for the murder of Father Marcelo Perez Perez (which occurred in October of last

year). They also asked that there be no "media simulation" of peace. Among the slogans at the event were, among others, "Government, define your position: are you with the people or with crime", "We want a solution, not simulation", "Cartels out of Chiapas", "Stop narcopolitics", "Stop forced displacements", "Stop death projects". The pilgrimage was led by the apostolic nuncio in Mexico, Joseph Spiteri and the bishops of the diocese, Rodrigo Aguilar Martinez and Luis Manuel Lopez Alfaro.

OAXACA: Attacks and repression against land and territory defenders continue

In January, Arnoldo Nicolas Romero, who disappeared shortly before, was found dead. He was a communal land commissioner of Buenavista, a municipal agency of San Juan Guichicovi, in the Tehuantepec Isthmus. Educa C.A. demanded an end to the repression against land and territory defenders, emphasizing that the commissioner always maintained a firm position in defense of life, as well as an active participation in the fight against the Interoceanic Train project and the construction of the so-called Development Poles, which opponents consider were imposed in rigged assemblies.

For their part, social and civil organizations expressed their "total repudiation and rejection of the violent repression" that shock groups carried out on January 14th against the residents who were protesting to denounce the imposition of a garbage dump in Oaxaca "without having consulted them, putting public health and the environment at risk". During their peaceful mobilization, "showing off their impunity," shock groups arrived and assaulted and evicted the protesters, "this being the second time that the government of Salomon Jara has used these criminal groups to intimidate those who oppose his government," they denounced. They also expressed their "total repudiation and rejection of the violent repression, using shock groups as a means to resolve the problems that

affect the people of Oaxaca.”

In February, the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Northern Zone of the Isthmus (UCIZONI) reported that Wilfrido Atanasio, Victoriano Quirino and Abraham Chirino, residents of “El Platanillo” in San Juan Mazatlan and members of the organization, were ambushed and killed on the border of the municipalities of Santo Domingo Petapa and San Juan Mazatlan. It said that the attack could have been carried out by community members of Santo Domingo Petapa and held the state government responsible, as it had been warned about the conflict and polarization between the municipalities. The National Indigenous Congress (CNI) and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) spoke out to demand justice, as well as an end to the war against indigenous peoples. “This is not an isolated incident, but part of the war of extermination that bad governments, local bosses and capitalist interests are imposing on our peoples,” they denounced.

Zapotec and Mixtec communities in the Central Valleys of Oaxaca continue their struggle against the “Zapotec Road Corridor” project, a plan that, according to the state government of Salomon Jara, aims to improve the region’s road infrastructure. However, many communities denounce the risk of deforestation, disappearance of groundwater, displacement of biodiversity, as well as damage to crop fields and water wells, among others. Representatives of the Front of Commissariats for the Defense of Land and Territory denounced the lack of rapprochement by government officials, violating their rights to self-determination and prior consultation. Despite being known as the “Zapotec Road Corridor,” many consider it to be a continuation of the old “Southern Bypass,” a project that was halted years ago due to protests.

On other notes, on November 25th, within the framework of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the network of Oaxacan Women Weaving Community denounced the rise in femicide



violence, as well as the multiplicity of forms of violence that women experience daily: physical, psychological, economic, sexual, political and digital. Likewise, it was outraged by “the omission and impunity of the State, which the government of Salomon Jara Cruz continues to perpetuate. Nothing has changed, that gender alert that was decreed in 2018 in light of the seriousness of the situation continues to be a mere simulation, which instead of translating into strategic actions to address and sanction those who violate us, attests to how painful numbers of femicides are sustained throughout the state. More than 209 since December 1st, 2022.” The Network has also documented 708 missing women during the current MORENA administration, “for which there is no progress in the investigations nor an efficient search mechanism that stops covering up criminals.”

GUERRERO: “Guerrero, in the abyss of death”, Tlachinollan

In November, German Reyes Reyes, former head of the municipal Public Security Secretariat of Chilpancingo, was brought to trial, after being accused of being responsible for the mur-

der of Mayor Alejandro Arcos Catalan last October. The mayor, from the PRI-PAN-PRD coalition, had appeared decapitated, with his head on the roof of his truck, after a meeting he attended, without escorts, in territory dominated by the criminal group Los Ardillos. “German Reyes Reyes, a retired military man accused of ordering the murder of the municipal president of Chilpancingo, Alejandro Arcos, served as a prosecutor for serious crimes from 2022 to 2024. In the new municipal administration, he managed to get a position as head of office in the Public Security Secretariat. His career in the state capital was cut short on November 12th, when he was arrested by the National Guard and the Army. At the initial hearing, the public prosecutor accused the official of being part of the criminal group Los Ardillos,” La Montaña Tlachinollan Human Rights Center explained.

It also questioned: “What could Guerrero society expect from a prosecutor in charge of investigating serious crimes when they accuse him of being part of a criminal group and prosecute him for the heinous murder of the municipal president? (...) the federal forces have not been able to overcome the destructive power of the criminal groups.

International Day
for the Elimination
of Violence
against Women
in Oaxaca City,
November 2024
© CIMAC



Instead of pushing them back and subduing them, they are strengthening and expanding. (...) In this scenario dominated by criminal organizations, the security strategy operated by the Army is flawed and unreliable, because the federal forces and the police corporations are on the opposite side of the victims."

In the framework of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in November, Tlachinollan denounced that the state "is stained with the blood of women, where at least 8 municipalities have a Gender Violence Alert due to the high rates of femicides. In the Mountain, cases of sexual violence have worsened; domestic, economic and psychological violence have left women defenseless because the authorities do not protect them; the most cruel are the disappearances because no one looks for them (...). Forced mar-

riages of girls continue to be practiced without state and federal authorities implementing actions to eradicate it." From January to October 2024, "20 femicides out of 180 murders of women were reported in Guerrero, four minors, 14 of 18 years of age and older and two without specifying age. 1,368 complaints were filed, 169 against personal freedom, 14 against life and physical integrity and two against human trafficking." Tlachinollan stated that these levels of violence are largely due to the impunity that prevails in the vast majority of cases.

On a more hopeful note, in January, authorities of the Communal Property of San Miguel del Progreso, municipality of Malinaltepec, integrated into the Regional Council of Agrarian Authorities in Defense of the Territory (CRAADET), reported that, after more than four years, the National Agrarian Reg-

istry (RAN) finally delivered its Communal Statute in the Me'phaa (Tlapanec) language; which they considered "an unprecedented and historic event" for the indigenous peoples of Mexico and a great advance in the defense of territories threatened by foreign interests. They stressed that "we can now act in accordance with the law, and without being criminalized when we act against those who claim the natural resources we have in our territory, as happens with the latent threat of mining companies; of companies that seek water or of those that want our biodiversity." "The recognition of our status means the fusion between agrarian law and the collective law of the indigenous peoples. With this, the federal government had to face a different way of interpreting the law and rethink the tools necessary to make our rights effective," they concluded ■

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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New Challenges in an Increasingly Turbulent World

“The flower of the word will not die. The hidden face of the one who names it today may die, but the word that came from the depths of history and the earth can no longer be torn away by the arrogance of power. (...) The light will be for the majority tomorrow, for all those who today cry at night, for those for whom the day is denied, for whom death is a gift, for whom life is forbidden.”

Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle

The international scene has been marked by instability and conflict: the war in Ukraine, the Israeli massacre in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli incursions in Lebanon and Syria, the civil war in Sudan, the armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Pakistan, Iran, Colombia, Haiti and Mexico, to name a few, encompass devastation and a worldwide number of people dead, missing, displaced and in need of humanitarian aid, which has reached its highest level in decades

Although Mexico is not experiencing an armed conflict or an open war recognized as such, the levels of violence reached due to the dispute for territorial control between the large cartels with the greatest presence in the territory have had consequences similar to those of these contexts.

To this already volatile reality, the return of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States adds tension. Since his inauguration, there has been a great international stir, as, very attached to his ideology of “America First”, he has launched a series of decrees that have generated both expectations and concerns in the global arena and some in particular for Mexico.

In this sense, the immigration issue, already controversial, has taken on particular relevance with the new measures and executive orders launched since the first day of his government, with Mexico being especially affected due to its proximity to the United States and the enormous number of Mexicans living in the United States (it is estimated that at least 11 million, of which four million are in an irregular situation).

U.S.-Mexico Border
(El Paso, Texas,
January 22, 2025)
© Charly
Triballeau / AFP



A border police vehicle patrols near the wall between the United States and Mexico in El Paso, Texas, on January 22, 2025
© Charly Triballeau / AFP

Cooperation or confrontation?

Since his first presidency, Trump has generated a complicated relationship with Mexico due to his racist and anti-immigrant discourse and his threats about the construction of a border wall that should have been paid for by Mexico, as well as the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the imposition of tariffs.

With his return, he has again adopted a tough stance towards Mexico, reaffirming his commitment to border security, which he has materialized by exerting pressure on the Mexican government to control the borders in order to stop migratory flows and drug trafficking, mainly fentanyl, in addition to threatening again with the imposition of tariffs if it does not do so.

While cooperation is crucial, it also poses challenges for Mexican sovereignty and the management of its internal policies. Since Trump took office and until today, various dialogues have taken place between him and President Claudia Sheinbaum to reach some agreements. The most talked about so far has been the one to postpone the application of the 25% tariffs for a month in exchange for the Mexican government sending 10,000 members of the armed forces to the border with the US to prevent illicit drug trafficking and participate in immigration control task. *“The important thing is dialogue (...) It is about collaborating, coordinating, without losing sovereignty, with respect for our territories,”* said Sheinbaum.

From decrees to absurdities

In his first 24 hours as president, Trump launched a series of executive orders, many of them focused on transforming immigration policies. For example, since January 20th, the use of the CBP One mobile application, which allowed people to schedule appointments at border entry points between Mexico and the United States to request asylum, was canceled; the entry of undocumented people into the United States under any circumstances was suspended, arguing that it is an invasion; the elimination of obtaining citizenship by birthright was proposed. However, this order immediately received multiple lawsuits in federal courts, so a judge temporarily blocked it; and, mass deportations have begun, as well as raids by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service (ICE) in different states of the country.

Another point included in one of Trump’s executive orders is the reactivation of the *“Remain in Mexico”* program, which requires asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their hearing dates in the United States. The question is: if it is now practically impossible to access the US asylum system, how does the new administration intend to implement this program? In addition, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) has noted that *“during Trump’s first administration, more than 71,000 asylum seekers had to ‘stay in Mexico’ and that human rights monitoring organizations collected more than 1,500 examples of violent crimes that these people suffered during their wait at the hands of or-*

ganized crime in Mexico and corrupt officials. The program enriched the cartels by providing them with a vulnerable population to kidnap and extort, and complicated relations between the United States and Mexico.”

The threat of mass deportations and border control

During his campaign, Trump promised to carry out a mass deportation of undocumented migrants. He then claimed that the detentions and deportations would focus on “criminals” and people with a criminal record, but since the first weeks of his term, when the raids began, this has not been the case. NBC reported that it is not possible to find data from the first days of his term, but they managed to find that “of the 4,422 people detained by ICE, in the first two weeks of February alone, 1,800 (41%) had no criminal convictions or pending criminal charges.”

This situation has generated fear and uncertainty among the migrant population, which has even caused many to take shelter in their homes and not go out for their daily activities, such as work, school or even shopping for food. In addition, it has further polarized the population.

While Sheinbaum said that Mexico received 4,094 deportees during the first week of Trump’s presidency - mostly Mexicans - according to official figures, this does not represent a big change, since during the administration of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (2018-2024), Mexico received up to 6,500 deported migrants per week. Until mid-February, the figure almost reached 14,000; of which approximately 3,000 have been of other nationalities, despite the Mexican government’s request to Washington to deport migrants to their countries of origin, not to Mexico.

Regarding immigration control, according to the organization Doctors Without Borders (MSF), since the last Trump administration, Mexican authorities have been actively preventing migrants and asylum seekers from reaching cities near the border with the United States. In the last quarter of 2024 alone, more than 475,000 migrants were reportedly detained on the Mexican side, an increase of nearly 68% compared to the same period last year.

They also note that “the Mexican government has carried out a historic and sustained crackdown on migration, detaining record numbers of migrants. In 2024, we observed a pattern of Mexican authorities busing large groups of migrants from the north of the country back to the south, forcing them to restart an endless cycle of attempts to cross Mexico, repeatedly exposing them to violence and extortion.”

These new measures have put Mexico in a complex situation, and new challenges may arise for the country. For



President Donald Trump, January 23, 2025
© Ben Curtis, AP

example, with mass deportations, the greatest impact will likely be seen at the local level, as communities try to assimilate the returns. The lack of resources and opportunities, coupled with the fact that many families have maintained a certain standard of living thanks to remittances, could increase conflicts and put families in a situation of even greater vulnerability and risk of falling into the networks of organized crime. Something similar could happen with migrants who have been stranded in Mexico and who could also be more exposed to human rights violations.

In addition, the decision of the Trump administration to freeze and drastically reduce USAID’s international cooperation programs has directly affected the shelter and protection system for migrants, with projects that have had to close or restructure, further reducing their response capacity.

Polarization

Since his previous campaign and mandate, Trump has been characterized by his handling of an openly racist and anti-immigrant discourse. This has caused the perception of immigrants of various nationalities in the United States to be strongly affected, which has led to an increase in xenophobia and discrimination.

This context has generated a strong polarization in the neighboring country, because, although the Trump government has a good number of supporters and broad support from officials and politicians, it is also true that a good



Immigrant advocates are closely watching California sheriffs to see how they will defend sanctuary law in the new Trump administration. Here, asylum seekers are detained by border patrol near Campo, on June 3, 2024
 © Robert Gauthier, Los Angeles Times via Getty Images

part of the population and some rulers do not share his vision and hate speech.

We have seen how after the implementation of his orders and decrees, various reactions have arisen. Legislators in some states led by Democrats have sought ways to give tools to undocumented immigrants so that they can defend themselves against the new reality and have tried to create a kind of “shield” to protect schools, churches and other spaces from immigration raids. Likewise, religious leaders such as Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde have asked Trump to show mercy to LGBTQ+ people and migrants, and have demanded that he avoid arrests of migrants in places of worship.

It has also been reported that employers have protected their workers, people have hidden undocumented immigrants in their homes or even, during raids, yelled at them not to go out, that they have that right.

Likewise, a series of protests have taken place such as the so-called “a day without migrants”, where mainly Hispanic people were called upon not to attend work or school. An international boycott of American brands that support Trump was also called upon by not consuming their products, and demonstrations have been held in several states, where thousands of people have taken to the streets with slogans such as: “Immigrants pay more taxes than Trump”, “Stop mass deportations” and “No one is illegal on stolen land”.

Impact on the Mexican Southeast

According to statistics from the Migration Policy, Registration and Identity of Persons Unit of SEGOB, based on data from the official repatriation points of the National Institute of Migration (INM), during 2024, Chiapas registered the highest number of deportees from the United States, with a total of 19,959 Chiapanecos repatriated, followed by Guerrero with 18,135 and Oaxaca which registered 15,912.

During the new Trump administration, there are still no exact figures, but it is possible that these three southeastern states will maintain the highest numbers, since due to their contexts of violence and poverty, they have been characterized as expelling states for decades.

Recently, the United States government determined that flights with Mexicans deported from that country only arrive at the southern border of Mexico, specifically Tapachula, which some consider could generate both a social and economic impact on the city. “Everything seems to indicate that those who do not manage to return immediately will have to stay in the city for at least a day or two, which would imply expenses in lodging, food and other basic services, which could generate an economic spillover in specific sectors,” said the president of the Association of Established Merchants and Property Owners of Tapachula (ACEITAP).

The first flight arrived on February 20th with a total of 122 people, the next day 84 were repatriated, on Saturday 157 arrived and this Tuesday 107 were deported, totaling 470 people from Puebla, Guerrero, Chiapas, Morelos, Oaxaca,



Guanajuato, Veracruz and Mexico City, among others. Deportees are given a Welfare card with 2,500 pesos so they can get to their states of origin, and in some cases, they are helped to buy a bus ticket for their return to their towns of origin.

Also in Chiapas, the National Institute of Migration (INM), the National Guard and the Municipal Police intensified operations, mainly in Tapachula and migratory corridors, with the objective of detaining migrants who are in national territory in an irregular situation.

In this regard, the Southern Border Monitoring Collective denounced the increase in inspections and detentions of migrants on highways and in cities such as Comitán, San Cristobal de Las Casas and Tuxtla Gutierrez, as part of the deployment of the Pakal Immediate Reaction Forces (FRIP).

These operations and detentions, like the raids that take place in the United States, have generated tension in those who seek to remain in the country or continue their journey to the north, and maintain them in fear and uncertainty.

There is concern that, with Trump's new demands for the control of migration flows, the increase in militarization and the recent presence of the FRIP, there will be an increase in actions that violate the human rights of people and families on the move.

More ideas to come

It seems that every day new ideas for immigration control emerge from the imagination of the president of the United States.

Just in the last week of February, he announced the creation of a registry for undocumented migrants and launched a new campaign to deport unaccompanied migrant children.

Regarding the registry, they have pointed out that it is mandatory and have warned that those who do not send their information to be included in the new database could face criminal sanctions. This system is intended to force undocumented immigrants to leave the United States "voluntarily."

As for the offensive against unaccompanied minors, the initiative establishes that ICE agents must follow the trail of unaccompanied minors to determine whether they are summoned to court or deported. Migrant defense organizations denounce that this campaign against children has as its real target the relatives who take them in.

Thus, it is very likely that this scenario of policies, executive orders, decrees and contradictions will continue in the coming months. What will be the position of the Mexican government? Are there conditions to deal with the repercussions of the policies and threats of Donald Trump's government? Although this article is focused on immigration policies, there are many more areas that will be affected by the occurrences or outbursts of the president of the neighboring country ■

Mexico, Tijuana: Asylum seekers wait for their appointment at CBP One before crossing through border at El Chaparral on January 20, 2025. Trump Administration Shut Down CBP App One. Mexico Builds Emergency Reception Centers Near Border in Response to U.S. Mass Deportation Plans © Carlos A. Moreno/ DPA via Europa Press / Evangeline O'Regan

“The Children’s Perspective is what Gives us Light for the Path”



Event for the change of coordination in Melel Xojobal, August 2024
© SIPAZ

For 22 years, Jennifer Haza Gutierrez was part of the organization that defends children’s rights, Melel Xojobal C.A., based in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas. Last December, she left her position as director. In an interview, she shared her experiences, lessons learned, and her hopes with us ▀

Introduction

Jennifer is originally from Mexico City, has a degree in Communication Sciences, and has diplomas in Children’s Rights and Strategic Litigation before the Inter-American Human Rights System, in Educational Participation with Street Populations, and in Bilingual Intercultural Education.

In 2002, she came to Melel Xojobal C.A. to carry out her social service in the area of accompanying working children on the streets. After working on different projects, she took on the position of General Coordinator for five years and, in 2013, that of Director. During her time in the organization, she has carried out educational work in public spaces and schools, as well as advocacy work, among other things. She identifies as a feminist and a defender of human rights.

Strengthening children from a place of dignity and hope

“I don’t know of any other organization in Mexico that explicitly claims the right of children to work in dignified and safe conditions,” Jennifer tells with us, referring to the work of Melel Xojobal, which focuses on defending the rights of working children, especially

those of indigenous origin. According to the organization, it is a form of income that is sometimes essential, with which they can support their families, who often have difficulty covering basic expenses. In addition, Melel Xojobal believes that “there are forms of dignified work that enrich and strengthen the development of capacities and skills of girls, boys and adolescents.”

Regarding the current situation of children, Jennifer told us: “I believe that increasingly children and adolescents have circumstances against them to be able to enjoy their rights in Chiapas and particularly the children of indigenous peoples. (...) Violence has increased in terms of frequency, but also in terms of cruelty against children. They are sometimes manifested in ways that are not so obvious, such as digital discrimination or daily exploitation, not only of children but of families. From my perspective, reality is going to be increasingly

difficult for children.”

In this context, Melel Xojobal’s work aims to strengthen children against violence so that they can grow in a space of dignity and hope and, from there, be able to find their place in the world. *“There is a political commitment together with the children. It is not that the organization comes to provide answers, pretending to transform reality. What is done, we do together with them.”* Another important aspect is the impact on public opinion, seeking to make people understand that children have the same rights as adults and that they have the right to enjoy them. *“What happens in the world, we cannot divide it between what happens to children and what happens to adults,”* she said.

The voice of childhood

For Jennifer, it has been important to accompany children in order to understand complex contexts. Not only has it allowed her to understand that *“to learn, you need the willingness to listen and observe,”* but also that the place where we are born and our origins mark different ways of being children. She considers it key to recognize the diversity of childhoods. In this sense, Melel’s work helps children understand that they are not destined to be victims of injustice, discrimination and violence, and that their economic situation or the fact that *“it has always been this way”* are not reasons that justify these realities. According to Jennifer, it is important for children to know that they have the right to use their voices to denounce violations of their rights.

Jennifer also spoke to us about public actions, such as marches, as well as processes and spaces aimed at girls and adolescent women. They had an impact on her, because she thinks they are important and powerful for the transformation, not only of girls, but also of women and men in the communities.

“There were no spaces to talk about violence against women (...) To go out to marches and take public space, speak



to the media and take the microphone. This energy seems very contagious and powerful to me,” she told us.

Melel Xojobal- True Light

In response to the question why Melel Xojobal bears that name, Jennifer answered: *“Those who founded Melel decided to name it True Light in Tsotsil because of the light in the eyes of children. Because the children’s eyes are what provide light for the path.”*

In this sense, she also shared with us what inspires her and gives her confidence and hope for a better future: *“As I said, things are going to get worse and reality will continue to become more difficult, but we continue to see many people who insist that it is important to continue supporting us, to think about other presents and futures and to build what is possible in*

everyday life. From the children, something that I also saw more clearly (...) is that, in times of crisis (...), children are the first to express their solidarity or to worry about how others are going to be, how their brother is going to be, how their mother is, who is going to take care of them. So, I think that this expression of solidarity is a component that I don’t know if it will save us, but it is what will keep us persisting in what is possible, in building hope and cracks from where we can see justice, dignity and people’s happiness. There can also be this true light, in these small cracks that are opening and that the children themselves are opening. We accompany them, and it is also a conviction that, by doing it together with them, we also transform ourselves in this process. So, these cracks of justice, freedom and dignity are for everyone.” ■

Activity in the framework of the international day of girls and adolescents, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, October 2024 © SIPAZ.

INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AND ACCOMPANIMENT

CHIAPAS

NOVEMBER

- We supported the marches held in the framework of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which took place in San Cristobal de Las Casas and Tuxtla Gutierrez.

- We attended the quarterly assembly of the Believing People of the diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas.

DECEMBER

- We supported the activities that took place within the framework of the Sixth Intercultural Meeting for Free and Chosen Mobilities, whose objective was to continue building spaces for exchange and community linkage between organized communities, civil society organizations, human rights defenders and people on the move. The meeting took place in Las Margaritas.

- We attended the event organized to inaugurate the mural made in honor of Father Marcelo Perez Perez, in the Cutxitali neighborhood, where he was murdered in San Cristobal de Las Casas in October.

- We were at the presentation of the book *"El camino de la no violencia"* (The Path of Non Violence), by the Las Abejas de Acteal Civil Society, which took place at the JTatik Samuel Museum.

- We participated in the events organized within the framework of the 27th anniversary of the Acteal massacre, on December 21st and 22nd.

- We attended the events organized by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in San Cristobal de Las Casas and Oventik (municipality of San Andres Larrainzar) from December 28th to January 1st, 2025.

JANUARY

- We accompanied the pilgrimage organized by the parish of Guadalupe in San Cristobal de Las Casas, on the birthday of Father Marcelo Perez, who was murdered in this same city in October 2024.

- We were present at the meeting of the Believing People with the apostolic nuncio in Mexico, Joseph Spiteri, and we accompanied the pilgrimage that took place within the framework of the closing of the Jubilee Year jTatic Samuel Ruiz.

FEBRUARY

- We attended the quarterly assembly of the Believing People of the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas.

- We were present at an event organized in San Cristobal de Las Casas within the framework of the global events: *"Justice for Samir Flores Soberanes!"*, on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the murder of the member of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) and opponent of the Morelos Integral Project (PIM).

INFORMATION AND TRAINING TOWARDS ACTION EDUCATION FOR PEACE

DECEMBER

- We shared an analysis with artisan women who participate in the Mujeres de Maiz collective, from various municipalities in the Highlands and the Northern Jungle.

- We facilitated the triennial evaluation of the Commission for Community Unity and Reconciliation (CORECO) with its operational team.

FEBRUARY

- Together with the organization specialized in digital security Sursiendo, we participated in a space with journalists and communicators, in which training and coordination proposals continued to be defined to strengthen the security of the sector.

- We facilitated the session on mediation and other forms of intervention, as part of the CORECO Positive Conflict Transformation diploma.

- We facilitated an analysis of the reality and a reflection on security and protection measures during the meeting of partners who collaborate with the German cooperation project Welthaus.

INTERNAL TRAINING

- In November, a member of the team participated in a new session of the Positive Conflict Transformation diploma, convened by CORECO.

- In December, we participated in a workshop on strengthening the heart, designed for women human rights defenders and coordinated by CORECO.

Pilgrimage of the Believing People of the diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, January 2025
© Rubén Moreno



- In January, we attended a new training session on digital care for cell phones, coordinated by Sursiendo.

- In February, we participated in the workshop *"How to integrate climate change in social organizations that work with women and vulnerable groups?"*, convened by the British Embassy, which took place in San Cristobal de Las Casas.

NETWORKING

- At least once a month, we attend plenary meetings and commissions of the network for Peace in Chiapas, Slamail Kinal. In November, this platform convened a meeting of civil organizations, journalists and academics, which was attended by 80 people and whose purpose was to share analysis and strategic reflections for the construction of peace in the state.

- On a bi-monthly basis, we attend operational meetings of the Movement of Peoples for Peace and Justice (MPPJ).

- Monthly, we hold online meetings of Accompaniment to Unarmed Civilians (USP/A) – Community of Practice.

- We held several meetings with organizations that collaborate in 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 January, we participated in a meeting with representatives of the pastoral areas that are part of the Monitoring Commission of the Mother Earth Con-

gress, a component of the social pastoral of the diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas.

- In January, we attended a virtual meeting of the Pax Christi International Working Group, in which participants from all over the American continent participated to share analysis and define a future agenda.

- In February, we participated in a meeting of partners who collaborate with the German cooperation project Welthaus.

- As part of the members of the Platform for the Construction of Peace in Mexico, we participated in the seventh meeting to analyze peace articulations in January, as well as in a space to share good practices entitled *"Weaving Networks for the Transition to Peace"* in February ■

