

June 13, 2025

MEXICO

Historical violence in Chiapas: We demand peace for Tsajalch'en

To the supportive public.

To the media.

To international human rights organizations.

To the Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas, Mexico, and the world.

Brothers and sisters,

In the Altos region of Chiapas, there is an indigenous Tsotsil community that has courageously raised its voice to tell the people of Mexico that they fear for their lives. On Sunday, June 8, while they were holding a meeting with children in the courtyard of the church in Tsajalch'en, they heard gunshots that hit the courtyard where they were standing and the roof of the basketball court. The ten people who were there managed to hide, and none were injured; however, fear set in.

Tsajalch'en is one of the communities that, in 1994, after the Zapatista uprising, decided to set up a civilian camp for peace on their territory, with the aim of receiving people displaced by the war. It is also a founding community of the Las Abejas Civil Society Organization of Acteal. It is important to remember that this historic organization of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas was formed in 1992 in response to an act of repression, when five indigenous people from the community of Tsajalch'en were unjustly detained.

Justice has not come to Tsajalch'en, neither in the 1990s nor now; on the contrary, the situation experienced by them as an indigenous people this week is part of a thread of continuity of violence and omission by the Mexican State.

As a Core Group of Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI in Mexico), we have documented the words of the people who live in that community and of those who survived the 1997 massacre. They have told us how, since 2021, every time they hear gunshots, they relive what happened on December 22, 1997, when 45 people from the community of Acteal were massacred. And today we join the dozens of organizations that have spoken out in recent days to say once again: Enough is enough!

We are particularly concerned about the integrity and safety of those who currently hold positions of authority within the indigenous community, as among the abuses documented this week we learned of an attempt to criminalize one of the same five people who were unjustly detained in 1992. On this occasion, the arrest was only for a few hours, and also targeted the municipal agent. The aim was to criminalize the exercise of their internal regulatory systems for prosecuting, in accordance with their internal regulations, a person accused of selling drugs. Autonomy and self-government are constitutional rights, enshrined in international law, but the state government sought to interpret them as criminal acts through the Pakal Immediate Reaction Force.

It is urgent that the authorities at all three levels of government take the necessary and urgent measures to guarantee security for the community of Tsajalch'en and the region. From this core group of organizations that sign this statement, we reiterate the demands we made public when Tsotsil priest Marcelo Pérez Pérez was murdered:

"We demand that the federal government, in coordination with state and municipal governments and with broad participation from civil society—especially indigenous peoples—design a comprehensive non-militarized security strategy that contains and addresses the operation of organized crime groups and armed groups. In addition to promoting spaces for reflection, dialogue, and training on peacebuilding in indigenous communities, with an emphasis on citizen security, human rights, and a framework of cultural relevance, respecting the collective rights of indigenous peoples."

Sincerely,

Core Group of Indigenous Peoples Rights International-IPRI in Mexico:

Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas (Chiapas);
Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan (Guerrero);
Colectivo Emancipaciones (Michoacán);
Colectivo Masehual Siuamej Mosenyolchikauanij (Mujeres que se apoyan),
CONAMI, ECMIA (Puebla);
Consultoría Técnica Comunitaria (Chihuahua);
Indignación, Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (Yucatán);
Instituto Mexicano para el Desarrollo Comunitario (Jalisco);
Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. - EDUCA (Oaxaca);
Voces del Territorio A.C.