

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8297>



Mexico

Chiapas: Blockades and Forced Displacement

- IV Online magazine - 2023 - IV585 - October 2023 -

Publication date: Tuesday 31 October 2023

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

From Chicomuselo, a town in southern Chiapas, a few kilometers from the border with Guatemala, an elderly woman has arrived in Mexico City's Zócalo. She is part of a mobilization to denounce the crisis in her community due to the violence unleashed by armed groups. She walks slowly, raising a handwritten placard, shouting "Justice for Chicomuselo!"

She asks us for security reasons not to mention her name and tells us that last September 3, members of a group calling themselves "Maíz" (Corn) arrived at her house. They came with guns in hand and, this time, they not only came to collect "protection" money for the little family-run local diner they run to survive. They were blunt: "Are you going to join the group or leave your house?" They gave the family only a couple of hours to vacate. The same happened to several neighbors in the community who, faced with the threat, preferred to flee their homes rather than join the ranks of organized crime.

Mrs. "N" and her family left their house in a hurry, leaving behind most of their belongings; they only managed to carry the bare necessities and their chickens. With no money and in the rain, they took refuge with neighbors who opened their doors to them. Without their diner, the family lost their only livelihood.

In addition to conflicts over religious intolerance, agrarian disputes, and other social problems, large parts of Chiapas are now territory controlled by cartels and crisscrossed by actions of the paramilitary groups defending mining interests in the region. The southern border has become a disputed territory for organized crime and big capital as it is strategic because of its wealth of natural resources and prime territory for trafficking drugs, arms, and human beings, all of which is fed by massive migration from Central America. Chiapas has been paralyzed in recent weeks by the blockades perpetrated by the New Generation Jalisco Cartel in a war against the Sinaloa Cartel, who cut off the electricity supply in several localities, causing food and fuel shortages, to the point that a kilo of beans cost up to one hundred pesos in the area, as opposed to its usual price of thirty to forty pesos.

The armed groups have used forced recruitment as a strategy, especially among the youth. These groups have entered the communities disguised as charitable social organizations such as the "Maíz group" mentioned by Mrs. "N." They come offering food and supplies, taking advantage of poverty. Those who fall into their hands are "affiliated" with criminal organizations and forced to participate in blockades, acts of vandalism, and criminal activities. They also come to extort and threaten shopkeepers and merchants, who are forced to close their businesses and escape from their homes, which are then taken over by members of criminal groups.

The result has been the breakdown of the fabric of society and the forced displacement of thousands of people. At the end of September, elementary and high school teachers in the municipalities of the highlands and border areas chose to suspend classes to protect their students, affecting thousands of students. Murders have increased by 23 percent between January and September according to figures from the National Public Security System (SNSP); and the number of disappearances is unknown.

What support Mrs. "N" has found in the face of the serious situation is thanks to the fact that she is part of a socially based political organization [We have omitted its name at their request for security reasons.]. With members of her organization, she went to Mexico City to demand justice and the intervention of the Federal Government. But neither the social nor the community organization has been able to confront the levels of violence in Chiapas. She says that weeks ago, a member of her organization was kidnapped, tortured, and forced to join the ranks of the cartels for fear of losing his life.

Chiapas: Blockades and Forced Displacement

Chicomuselo and many other towns in Chiapas, have become towns without authorities, where the inhabitants live in dread, in silence, in fear of the permanent surveillance that weighs on them, as organized crime has people videotaping and taking pictures of people who meet up with others or talk to each other. In the absence of the state, the drug cartels have penetrated the communities, to the point of being cheered—or worse, with the ability to make an entire population applaud them—as heroes by the villagers for opening a blockade of the opposing cartel, as we observed in a video that went viral a few days ago. However, the affected residents denounce that the local and state governments try to convince the public that the security problem in Chiapas is minor and do not respond to their demands, despite massive mobilizations and protests. This media policy has been echoed at the federal level, as the president has reiterated on several occasions that in Chiapas the rates of violence are low, and that the exacerbation of the situation is "right-wing propaganda."

It was only in the face of the undeniable seriousness of the situation that went viral that the Army and the National Guard intervened to lift the blockades and reestablish electricity. "Everything is back to normal," described the First Executive after the entry of the military. However, hundreds of workers and merchants do not have guarantees of the conditions they need to return to work. This is why, with the few resources they have, members of the group to which Mrs. N belongs, together with others, mobilized to Mexico City on October 17 to make this situation visible, demand the participation of the federal government to solve the problem, and make a proposal for the safe return of all those who have been displaced or, at least, to implement a plan that guarantees food for displaced families. The Chiapas organizations were supported by various Mexico City groups.

A delegation from this mobilization was received by an official from the Ministry of the Interior Area for Conciliation. In response to the demands and proposals, the official limited himself to saying, "This situation is beyond our control; it is the responsibility of the state government. I will refer you to the corresponding authority in Chiapas." To the same state authority that has already ignored the inhabitants of southern Chiapas. Meanwhile, on October 21, a professor was tortured and murdered in his home in front of his family. Professor Artemio López Aguilar, a teacher leader and militant of the ruling MORENA party, who coordinated the march for peace on October 12 in Chicomuselo, was murdered amid the existing "peace" in Chiapas.

October 20, 2023

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.