

Mexico

Up to 40,000 people were displaced in the Mexican state of Chiapas during an uprising by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in 1994, and its subsequent confrontations with government forces. OHCHR cited a range between 3,000 and as many as 60,000 IDPs in 2003, and around 5,500 were reportedly still displaced in 2007.

In 1995, the army launched a counter-attack which caused further displacement of supporters of the Zapatista movement, and paved the way for the return of displaced supporters of the government. This aggravated social divisions within the indigenous communities which have yet to be resolved. A 1996 agreement recognising indigenous rights and culture, and in particular the right to land, has never been implemented, and tensions have continued between, on one side, the Zapatista movement and supporting indigenous communities, and on the other, the government and other affiliated communities. In 2006, state authorities reportedly started to evict people from land they occupied from large-scale landowners in 1994.

Meanwhile most IDPs have resettled across rural Chiapas, though small IDP sites remain. It has been reported that they continue to receive support from the Zapatista movement, which has established “auton-



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	5,500–21,000
Percentage of total population	0.01%– 0.02%
Start of current displacement situation	1994
Peak number of IDPs (and year)	40,000–60,000 (1995)
New displacement in 2008	Undetermined
Returns in 2008	Undetermined
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict
Human development index	51

omous” municipalities in areas under their control with health and education facilities which also provide services to the IDPs. The most pressing concerns of IDPs are based on their general poverty due to limited access to land and insecurity of tenure over that land. The solution to their displacement thus lies in the original concern of the Zapatista movement: secure ownership of land to make agricultural communities sustainable.

The Government created a multi-sectoral commission to respond to the IDP situation, but no significant impact has been reported and there were no IDP-specific laws in 2008. There is no international response to the situation in the absence of an obvious humanitarian crisis, and so it has been left to human rights NGOs to advocate for the IDPs.

Guatemala

Between 500,000 and 1.5 million people were displaced by internal armed conflict in Guatemala in the early 1980s. The conflict between government forces and insurgent factions grouped under the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) ended in 1996, but not before the armed forces had carried out brutal “scorched-earth” campaigns to crush the insurgents, which involved extensive human rights violations against civilians.

The end of conflict left large numbers of IDPs dispersed across the country, many of them in the shanty towns of the capital Guatemala City, where they worked in the informal sectors as street sellers, domestic workers or in factories, or on the southern coast, where some worked as seasonal labourers on large land holdings. These IDPs joined the ranks of the poorest citizens of what is one of the poorest countries in the Americas, and their access to the basic necessities of life and enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights has remained difficult. This is still the case for both IDPs and other vulnerable groups who were also affected by the conflict, such as people without work, disabled people, or people with specific health care needs.

Twelve years after the end of the conflict, some suggest that there are no merits to keep on considering IDPs separately. However, outstanding problems such as the number of

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	Undetermined
Start of current displacement situation	1980
Peak number of IDPs (and year)	500,000–1,500,000 (1983)
New displacement in 2008	0
Returns in 2008	0
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict
Human development index	121

forcibly displaced people still unable to regain their land or fully reintegrate elsewhere means it is still necessary to consider them as a separate group with specific protection needs related to their former displacement. IDP organisations claim their members are still suffering from loss of land and work. Government land programmes are not moving forward and access to land remains necessary for IDPs to return to home areas. The situation is not likely to improve without greater government capacity and willingness to manage land programmes including the credit system for land purchases.

In 2008 there were no institutions specifically addressing the needs of IDPs in Guatemala. The land reforms which the government had attempted had not brought any positive results, and IDPs were still waiting for effective reparations.