

THE EL SALVADORAN CIVIL WAR

1979 - 1992



FEBRUARY 25, 1977

General Carlos Romero comes to power through a fraudulent election. Widespread voter fraud sparks unrest, deepening public distrust in the military-led government.

2

OCTOBER 15, 1979

President Romero is overthrown by a military coup. A reformist group comes to power, but repression continues, failing to stop the growing insurgency.

2



OCTOBER 15, 1979

The Junta Revolutionary Government (JRG) takes power with U.S. support. The U.S.-backed JRG promises reforms but escalates repression, prompting opposition groups to radicalize.

2, 3



JANUARY 22, 1980

The JRG military kills 20 and injures over 200 during a mass protest against the JRG. The military's violent response to peaceful demonstrators further alienates the public and strengthens rebel recruitment.

1



MARCH 24, 1980

JRG opponent Archbishop Óscar Romero is assassinated after calling for an end to military repression. His murder by a right-wing JRG-supporting death squad shocks the nation and becomes a rallying point for anti-government resistance.

2



MARCH 30, 1980

Romero's funeral is attacked by the JRG military; 50 are killed.

The military's assault on mourners confirms its brutal tactics, pushing more civilians to support the insurgency.

5

OCTOBER 10, 1980

The Leftist FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) is formed in opposition to the JRG. Five leftist guerrilla groups unite into a single armed movement, beginning full-scale civil war against the JRG.

4



DECEMBER 2, 1980

Four U.S. nuns are raped and murdered by the JRG military's National Guard. The incident draws international attention to the regime's brutality.

2



DECEMBER 1980

In his final days in office, U.S. President Carter pauses all aid to El Salvador, a short-lived response to human rights abuses that were quickly reversed by the next administration.

1



EARLY 1981

The Reagan Administration is brought into office in the U.S. and resumes military aid to El Salvador.

With Cold War priorities, the U.S. ramps up support for the JRG military as the U.S. saw the FMLN as being backed by the Soviet Union.

2, 5





DECEMBER 10, 1981

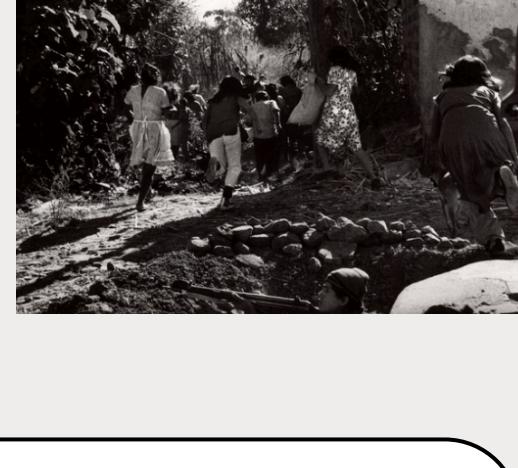
The Mozote Massacre saw over 1,000 El Salvadoran civilians killed by the army. A key turning point that highlights the scale of state violence later becomes a symbol of wartime atrocities.

2

MARCH 1982

ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance) rises to power. Death squad-linked leader consolidates conservative control, opposing reform and peace efforts.

2, 3



MARCH 1984

José Napoleón Duarte is elected president. Seen as a moderate, Duarte's leadership brought limited reform, failing to end the war.

2

MARCH 1984

U.S. Congress increases military aid to the JRG. Continued American support prolongs the war and strengthens JRG's forces.

3



MARCH 1985

Christian Democrats win election, gaining temporary political leverage but struggle to implement peace or reforms.

4



LATE 1985

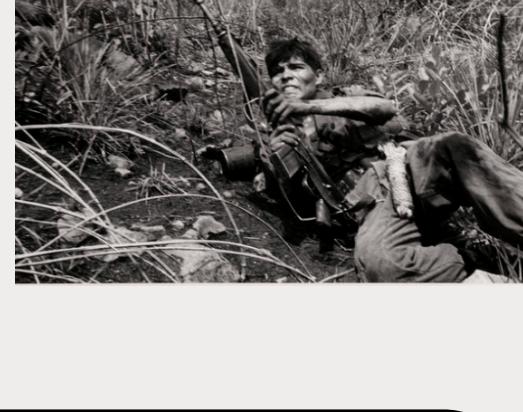
The “United to Reconstruct” counterinsurgency campaign begins, combining military action and aid to undercut FMLN support, but it has limited success.

2

MARCH 31, 1987

The FMLN kills 42 Salvadoran soldiers and a U.S. adviser. The event demonstrated the FMLN’s sustained military strength deep into the war.

5



MARCH 1988

ARENA wins Legislative Assembly elections, shifting the government rightward, stalling peace negotiations.

1, 2

MARCH 1989

ARENA’s Alfredo Cristiani becomes president. His administration begins secret negotiations with the FMLN under international pressure from the Soviet Union.

2



OCTOBER 31, 1989

Opposing rebel forces are bombed. Intimidation of peace advocates continues despite ongoing talks of a ceasefire.

2



JULY 26, 1990

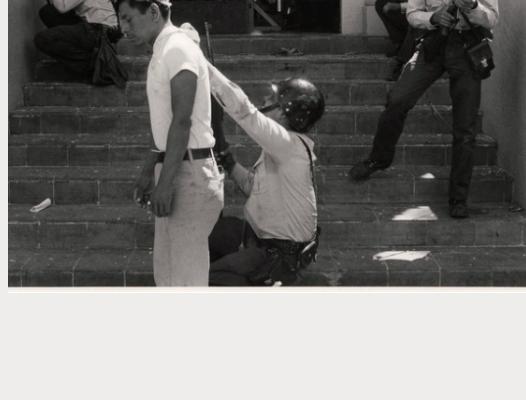
The San José Accords are put in place. The accords call for the UN to monitor human rights in El Salvador, laying the groundwork for formal peace negotiations and accountability.

4

APRIL 27, 1991

The Mexico Accords are put in place. The accords introduce key military, judicial, and electoral reforms that are agreed upon, in a move toward demilitarization.

2



JANUARY 16, 1992

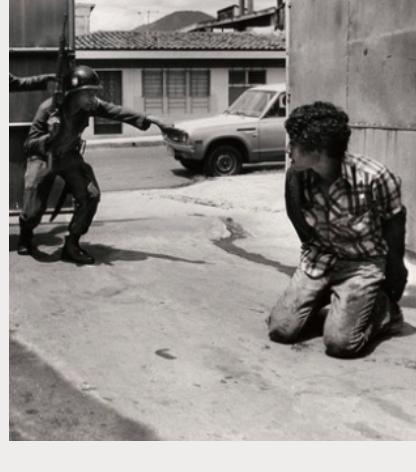
Chapultepec Peace Accords signed. Ends 12 years of war; FMLN agrees to disarm, U.S. ends its involvement in the conflict.

3

FEBRUARY 1, 1992

Formal ceasefire begins, marking the official end of combat between ARENA and FMLN forces.

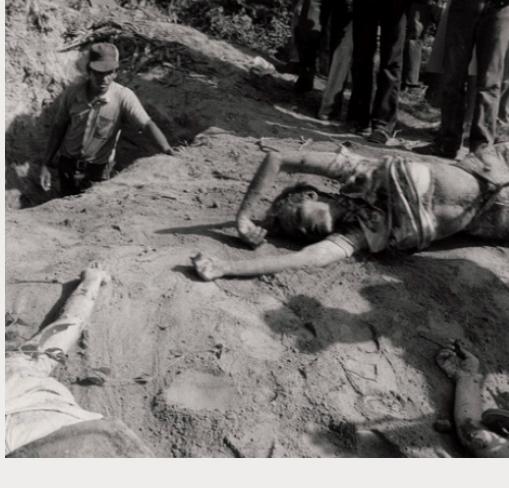
2



JUNE 28, 1992

The ARENA National Guard and Treasury Police are abolished as part of demilitarization and transitional justice efforts.

1



JULY 1, 1993

The ARENA Defense Minister and the military command resign. Further steps in reducing military control over civilian government.

4

MARCH 20, 1994

The first inclusive elections are held. FMLN participated as a

legal party, finalizing the transition from civil war to democracy.

3



CITATIONS

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