**El Salvador**

**Civil war (1980-1992)**

**Categories:** Internal armed conflict; coup; truth commission; indigenous peoples

**Actors:** Salvadorian state*;* Salvadorian Armed Forces and security corps; paramilitary groups; Guerrilla groups (mainly the FMLN); campesinos; indigenous peoples; Salvadorian political parties; various civil organisations.

Different sources estimate that around 75,000 people were killed during the conflict, and 8,000 were forcibly disappeared. In the report of the CVR, the state (through the army, security corps, and linked paramilitary groups) is considered responsible for about 84% of the cases analysed.

**Key historical events**

1979 – On 15 October, a coup led by the army ousted General Carlos Romero from the presidency. A Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno (JRG) took control of the government.

1980 – On 24 March, Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated while celebrating mass. A massive crowd attended his funeral on 30 March, but they were shot, causing many casualties.

1980 – In November, several groups opposed to the government founded the guerrilla organisation Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN).

1981 – Masacre de El Mozote. As part of a series of violent counterinsurgency operatives, in December the army burned a series of rural towns, torturing and murdering the local population.

1983 – Masacre del Cantón Las Hojas. In February, army troops murder around 74 campesinos belonging to an indigenous peoples’ organisation in the Sonsonate department.

1983 – Marianella García, a lawyer known for her work on human right issues, was killed by the army.

1984 – José Napoleón Duarte won the elections and became president.

1985 – Following a series of kidnappings of mayors during the year, the FLMN kidnapped Inés Duarte, the president's daughter. She was released following negotiations on the release of political prisoners.

1986 – The high number of displaced people as a result of the war led to the creation of the Coordinadora Nacional de Repoblación (CNR) to help repopulate some areas.

1987 – Guatemala was one of the Centro American countries that subscribed to the Esquipulas II agreement, to work towards reconciliation commissions and amnesty laws.

1988 – Herbert Anaya, head of the organisation Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador, was assassinated near his home, prompting widespread commotion.

1989 – Alfredo Cristiani was elected president. The FMLN launched its biggest offensive, operation “Hasta el Tope”, pressuring the government.

1989 – On 16 November, six Jesuit priests and two women were killed by army troops in the Universidad Centroamericana. The killings were widely condemned, both locally and abroad.

1991 – The United Nations established an Observer Mission to oversee the partial agreements between the Salvadorian government and the FMLN.

1992 – Acuerdos de Chapultepec. On 16 January, after many years of negotiations, the Salvadoran government and the FLMN signed a peace agreement in the city of Chapultepec in Mexico. A series of state reforms were enacted as part of the agreement.

1993 – An amnesty law was issued, the *Ley de Amnistía General para la Consolidación de la Paz*. This instrument was subsequently questioned, and abolished in 2016.

**Memory initiatives**

*Informe “De la Locura a la Esperanza: La guerra de 12 años en El Salvador”* (1993)*:* the final report documenting the work of the Comisión de la Verdad

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/183599?ln=es>

*Caso Masacres de El Mozote y lugares aledaños vs. El Salvador:* In 2012, the IACHR declared that the Salvadorian state was responsible for human rights violations, and thus it must investigate them and make reparations. The Salvadorian state has delayed its response to this resolution.

**Sites of memory**

*Monumento a la Memoria y a la Verdad:* a granite memorial inaugurated in 2003, located in the Cuscatlán Park in San Salvador. It contains the names of victims of the civil war.

*Memorial de Sisiguayo:* a commemorative monument for victims of a massacre during the war, inaugurated in 2018 in the Usulután department.

**Organisations**

*Comités de Madres Históricos de Personas Asesinadas, Torturadas y Desaparecidas de El Salvador (COMADDRES y CODEFAM):* two organisations of relatives of victims of human rights violations that have been active since the late 1970s.

*Tutela legal del Arzobispado:* an organisation dedicated to the advancement of human rights that was active from 1982 to 1993, continuing the work of a previous organisation (Socorro Cristiano).

Some of the staff continued their work in another institution, the *Asociación de Derechos Humanos, Tutela Legal "Dra. Maria Julia Hernandez”.*

*Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES):* a non-governmental organisation that has been working since 1982 in the promotion of human rights.

Comisión de la Verdad: the investigative body that was created after the peace agreement to investigate the causes and consequences of the violence that took place from 1980 onwards.

*Procuradoría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos:* a state institution created after the peace agreement to promote and protect human rights in the country.

**Issues specific to the country**

Different organisations have petitioned the Salvadoran government to issue a law concerning transitional justice, reparation, and reconciliation, unsuccessfully.

The current government has been recently under scrutiny for human right violations occurred during an ongoing state of exception in the country.