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THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS
CASE STUDY: CHIAPAS, MEXICO

A THESIS
The Honors Program
College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Distinction
"All College Honors"
and the Degree Bachelor of Arts
In the Department of Government

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May, 1996

PROJECT TITLE: The Role of Human Rights Organizations. Case Study: Chiapas.Mexico

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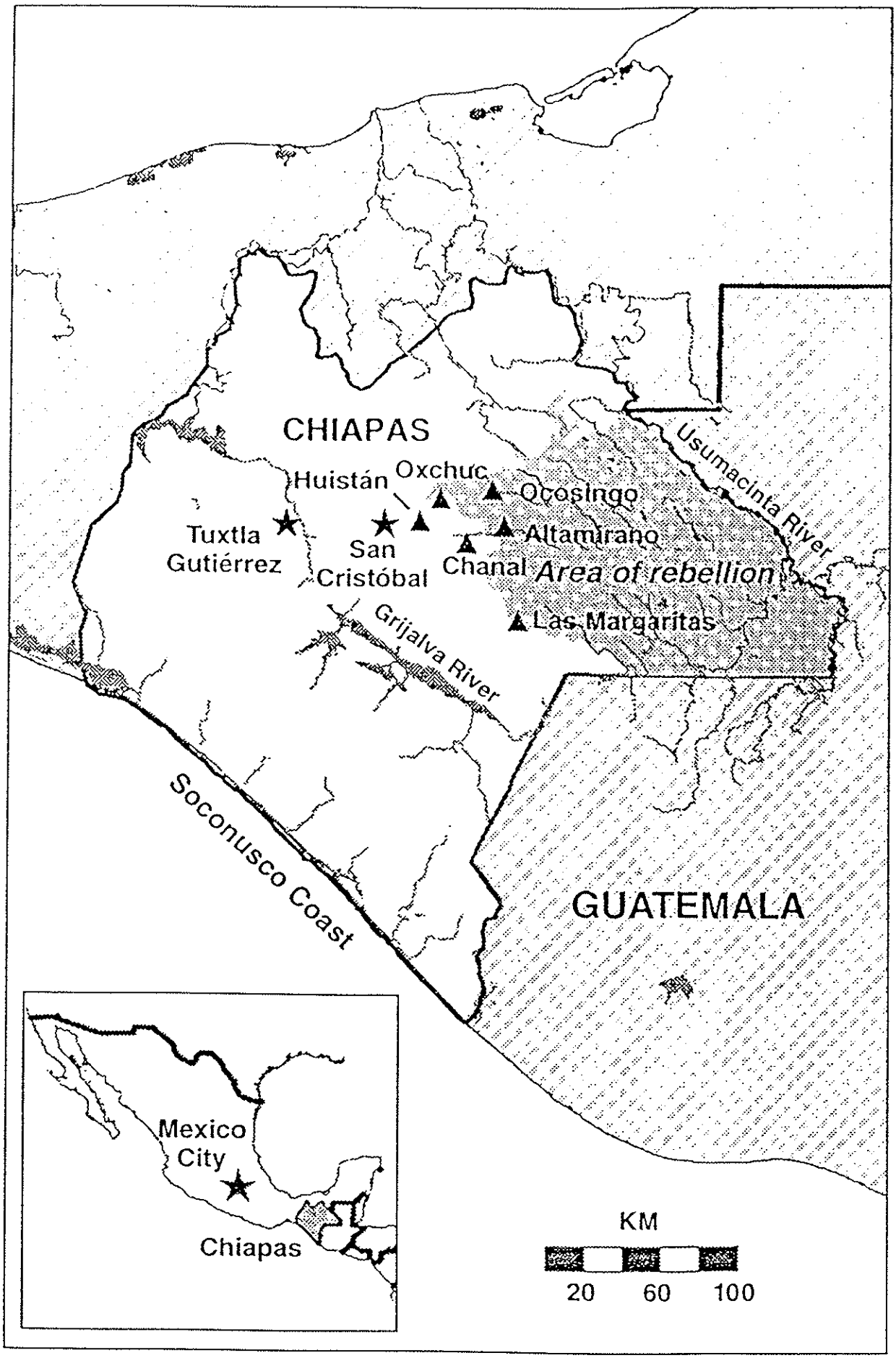

Chiapas and the Area of Zapatista Rebellion.

ABBREVIATIONS

CONPAZ	Commission of Nongovernmental Organizations for Peace
CNDH	National Human Rights Commission
EZLN	Zapatista National Liberation Army
HRW/A	Human Rights Watch/Americas
ICHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
PAN	National Action Party
PHR	Physicians for Human Rights
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
UN	United Nations
WWW	World Wide Web

On January 1, 1994, members of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) seized the municipal buildings of a series of small towns in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas: Altamirano, Chanal, Huistán, Las Margaritas, Ocosingo, Oxchuc, and San Cristóbal de las Casas. The Zapatistas, as the members are called, declared:

> Hoy Decimos Basta! Today we say enough is enough! To the people of Mexico: Mexican brothers and sisters: We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later [when] the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied the most elemental education so that others can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food, and no education. Nor are we able freely and democratically to elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children. (Collier 2)

The rebellion in Chiapas compelled Mexico and the rest of the international community to acknowledge and examine the issues that were being raised by indigenous peoples, whose voices had been essentially ignored until this time.

This paper will examine the roles of various human rights groups with emphasis on their activities in Chiapas. The goals of each organization will be examined along with the methods they use to reach these goals. This examination will determine the types of human rights organizations that are represented in Chiapas and show the effectiveness of their interactions with the general public and with each other in their effort to uncover, stop, and prevent human rights abuses.

HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Universal human rights first became a salient international issue after WWII. The overall failure of the international community to respond to the atrocities of the Holocaust compelled the founders of the United Nations (UN) to place human rights issues at the center of the UN's mandate (Posner 30). With the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights came the creation of a myriad of regional, national, and international human rights organizations.

This document allows organizations to bring human rights abuses to international recognition and participate in the process designed to assure all peoples' safety, liberty, and respect. The Declaration also provides the common

definition of human rights used in international law.

Sovereignty

For many countries, one of the main areas of political contention regarding the Declaration was the lack of sovereignty inherent in the universality of human rights. Until WWII, there was "no important legal doctrine [which] challenged the supremacy of the state's absolute authority within its borders" (Sikkink 413). One of the main reasons for the Universal Declaration was to create a safeguard for citizens from the threat of human rights abuses by their own government. With the adoption of the Declaration, citizens were given a legitimate right to demand certain liberties from their government. Also, in addition to being examined by their own citizens, the Declaration made it legitimate and imperative for states to examine each others treatment of their residents.

According to the traditional definition of sovereignty, as established by the World Court, the state "is subject to no other state, and has full and exclusive powers within its jurisdiction" (Hoffmann 164). The idea of the Declaration is in direct conflict with this definition, as it calls for international involvement in promoting respect for these rights both nationally and internationally. The preamble of the Declaration states:

> Now, Therefore, The General Assembly proclaims This Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to

> the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Although this is the position the UN holds, "[G]ross violator states and a coterie of others uncomfortable with the very idea of external scrutiny of human rights still labor assiduously to keep the UN's action-oriented human rights mechanisms small, ineffective, and marginalized from field operations and hands-on programs of the world body" (Tessitore 176). Several states, such as China (infanticide) and the majority of African states (female genital mutilation) feel the activities within their borders should stay as such and not be subject to international scrutiny. Kathryn Sikkink, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Minnesota, points out that "the moral flaw to internal sovereignty that became glaring during World War II was that if the state itself posed the primary threat to the well-being of citizens, these citizens had nowhere to turn for recourse or protection" (413).

Networks

Kathryn Sikkink, in her article "Human Rights, Principled Issue-Networks and Sovereignty in Latin America", refers to human rights organizations as international issue-networks (411). These networks differ from other transnationally organized interest groups because they are "driven primarily by shared values or principled ideas--ideas about what is right and wrong--rather than shared causal or instrumental goals" (412).

The organizations who make up an international issue-network often exchange information and services on an international basis. International issue-networks are comprised of international and regional inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), international and national human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private foundations. This paper will be focused on the work of and relationship among IGOs, NGOs, and governmental organizations who have affected the ongoing events in Chiapas, Mexico.

Sikkink attributes a strong human rights network to its size and density (416). The direct results of a large network are an effective flow of information and an increase in the availability of services. Sikkink points out the following three types of informational interconnections among human rights organizations (416-417):

1) *Informal exchanges* of reports, telephone calls, and attendance at conferences and meetings.

2) *Formal exchanges* when NGOs with official consultative status with

inter-governmental organizations present reports to these organizations.

3) *Flow of funds and services* (this is especially noticeable among foundations and NGOs, but may be seen in training for other NGOs in the network).

These three interconnections keep human rights organizations in constant interaction with each other. The organizations' communication can be very informal and uncoordinated (Sikkink 417) and still be very effective.

One of the most important features of the international human rights network is the impact it has had on sovereignty. The international pressures placed on a government which supports noninterference can cause that government to reconceptualize its understanding of sovereignty and eventually change its domestic human rights practices.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Mexico's human rights record was not given much attention by the human rights network. "The existence of a civilian elected government, Mexico's progressive stance on international human rights, and the absence of Mexican human rights organizations kept Mexico from becoming a concern of the network" (Sikkink 429-430). This began to change in the late 1980s when the number of human rights organizations increased in Mexico. The creation of the Mexican Academy for Human Rights in 1984 provided an opportunity for human rights debate in Mexico. It was created by a group of

Mexican intellectuals, activists, and politicians as an academic institution rather than as an activist group (Sikkink 430) and began a wave of involvement which continues today.

In Chiapas, the Mexican government has been continually pressured by various domestic and international organizations to examine their human rights practices. This pressure has caused the Mexican government to respond with its own human rights agency (discussed later) and to allow foreign observers to document practices in Chiapas.

MEXICO

Prior to the Salinas administration, there were few human rights organizations in Mexico. Today, there are more than 200 independent non-governmental human rights groups who monitor abuses. The initial impetus for this increase was the drastic change in the political system of Mexico. Since 1929, the Institutional Revolutionary party (PRI) has dominated the seemingly single-party political structure of Mexico. Although the Mexican government is considered democratic and holds elections for president, the PRI has used different tactics to block any opposition party candidates the chance to get elected. "Using its control over the Mexican state to distribute patronage and wealth to its loyal supporters in all social classes, [the PRI] denied other parties the constituencies they needed to pose a threat at the ballot box" (Wynia 74). In addition to 'buying' votes, the PRI has stepped up its laws regarding peasant loyalty. José Patrocinio González (PRI member), upon becoming governor of

Chiapas, "revised the penal code to make it easier for the state government to punish dissent" (Collier 127). This revision could be used as a tool of repression when peasants stop supporting the PRI.

The 1988 elections resulted in a PRI loss of membership and a rise in independent groups participating, most importantly the opposition's presidential candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The election was very close and lacked credibility yet the PRI remained victorious. There were several accounts of electoral fraud (the same types of fraud were repeated in the 1994 election) including doctored voting lists in PRI-controlled settlements by voters registering six to seven times, theft of thousands of Cardenista voter identification cards, and an alleged 89.9% of Chiapas voters, including peasants, were recorded as supporting the PRI (Collier 17, 79, 80).

This political controversy sparked much concern among the people of Mexico and the international community. Many peasants, labor, human rights, and other social groups were created during this time and those already established took this opportunity to increase their membership base. Human rights groups thrived on exposing election related abuses and violations. Perhaps the most disturbing election related event in 1988 was the murder of two of Cárdenas' aides, Ramón Gil Heráldez and Francisco Xavier Ovando. José Ramón García Gómez, a Revolutionist Workers party activist, disappeared while driving to a meeting of Cárdenas supporters in Dec. 1988 (Lutz 78).

The PRI did not have a strong showing in the 1988 elections. The PRI's three main sectors had a membership of 30 million yet Salinas only received 9.6

million votes (Wynia 163). The opposition won almost every major city save Monterrey, and won the states of Morelos, Michoacán, Mexico, and Baja California (Wynia 163). Half of the electorate didn't even vote. This non-voting trend has been viewed as a strategy for real political change in light of the PRI's fraudulence. It has been reported that as many as 80% of the Mexican voters didn't vote in the 1993 state elections (Healy 7).

While rejecting the involvement of foreign election observers, the Mexican government has allowed international human rights observers to investigate electoral processes. However, they still restrict access to certain government facilities and documents (Barry 64).

The Mexican government has always felt strongly about Mexico's sovereignty and non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs, yet it actively promotes human rights in the international community (Lutz 78). In 1988, the Mexican delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Commission stated, "Our country's adhesion to the most important multilateral human rights instruments entails a permanent double commitment: to preserve their full protection internally, and to contribute to their observance in the world within the judicial framework that the international community has established" (Sikkink 430). This verbal statement contradicts the actual practice of Mexico which has been a "failure to address a pattern of domestic human rights violations" (Sikkink 430).

The Mexican government has tried to project a human rights-friendly image by offering political asylum to those who flee their country due to political

persecution (Lutz 78) and by creating its own human rights organization: the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH).

Rebellion

The January 1, 1994 rebellion, which has contemporary roots in the rebellion, propelled the issue of human rights in Mexico to the forefront of international attention. It also brought international exposure to internal Mexican policies which have essentially been ignored until this time. The international exposure that Chiapas has been subjected to as a result of the rebellion has made human rights an important factor in internal Mexican policy. Human rights organizations who had been working in Chiapas for years without substantial recognition finally received the international attention they needed to begin an "immediate national dialogue to address the root causes of the social unrest" (Healy 6).

Emiliano Zapata

The struggle of the Chiapanecos is not a new one. In the Mexican Revolution of 1910, Emiliano Zapata and his followers demanded the right to own and control the land they worked. Zapata (b.August 8, 1879-d.April 10, 1919) was an Indian who joined the revolt against Porfirio Díaz and refused to lay down his arms until revolutionary leader Francisco Madero distributed land. Zapata is the revolutionary hero whose struggle has been revived with the Zapatistas because he fought to change the rural status quo. His goal was not to create a new society, "but a simple desire to regain for his village the land that

had been taken away by local sugar barons with the government's encouragement" (Wynia 69). Similarly, the EZLN is fighting for their basic human rights and for a truly democratic government, not for the complete takeover by the Zapatistas.

Constitution of 1917

The result of this Revolution was a series of reforms made in the 1917 Constitution, one of the most progressive constitutions of its era. The Constitution called for labor reforms, gave the state control of natural resources, established a preeminently presidential government, and invested national sovereignty and the right to modify government in the people of Mexico (Healy 5).

The Land Reform Act (Article 27) proposed to change the opportunities for the indigenous communities by turning national land over to *ejidos* (collectively owned and individually cultivated lands vested in peasant communities). "Article 27 required that lands seized illegally from the peasantry during the Porfiriato be restored and provision be made for those communities that could not prove legal title" (Meyer 544). The emphasis on ejidos changed private landownership into more of a privilege than an absolute right. Ejidos protected poor landowners from being easily pushed aside by larger landowners. However, large landowners still proved a difficult force to overcome in gaining these lands because they blocked land reform. This caused many peasant communities extreme difficulty in receiving their rightful claims.

In 1992, the Mexican government, led by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, rewrote Article 27 of the agrarian reform section of the Mexican Constitution and brought an end to the "progressive" land reform policies. These policies had been an essential link that connected the peasants to the government for the last half century. This critical new law allowed for the sale of land and virtually eliminated the possibility of peasants legally obtaining land. With the new law, large landholders were given the legal right to augment their current property and the chances for small landowners to even retain their property were undermined. Gortari referred to ejidos as "unproductive and ultimately concluded that they were a failure". (Meyer 697). He used their existence as the cause for rural poverty, low income statistics, and Mexico's lack of self-sufficiency in food production (Meyer 697). The relationship that the peasants had with the government became strained. The peasants legitimized taking up arms because, due to the new law, they had no legal recourse to pursue what was rightfully theirs.

The modern-day Zapatistas continue to fight for the demands made during the Revolution of 1910, particularly re-distribution of the land. They are also fighting for demands which reflect the current struggle they face as indigenous peasants. They issued a public statement to the Mexican people and asked for: "support in the . . . struggle for work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace. We declare that we will not stop fighting until the basic demands of our people have been met by forming a government of our country that is free and democratic" (Healy

5). In addition to these, the Zapatistas called for "recognition of ethnic distinctiveness and dignity as well as participation in the democratic process as the Mexican economy becomes integrated into global markets . . . annulling a government elected fraudulently and installing a transition government to ensure democratic voting procedures in the 1994 presidential elections" (Nash 8). The demand to be included in the democratic process and economy made this rebellion effective due to Mexico's situation at that time (elections and NAFTA).

NAFTA

By having the rebellion take place on the inaugural day of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Zapatistas ensured themselves a place in the international spotlight and caught the Mexican government and army off-guard. *Subcomandante* Marcos (the Zapatista spokesperson) was reported as saying: "The truth of the matter is that the decision about when to rise up didn't take national politics into account. That's not so important to the comrades, not so much as not being able to stomach things any longer, regardless of national or international conditions" (Collier 87). In another report, Marcos was reported as saying: "The uprising had been ten years in preparation and was timed to coincide with the adoption of [NAFTA]--a treaty he characterized as 'a death certificate for the Indian peoples of Mexico" (PHR/HRW report 8). Yuri Guerra, a member of the humanitarian aid group Pastors for Peace stated, "NAFTA was not a major reason for the uprising. It was useful to make Americans understand--they knew of NAFTA" (personal

communication).

Whether NAFTA really did play a significant role in the decision of the Zapatistas or not, the Jan. 1, 1994 date resulted in immediate international importance for the rebellion. The Mexican government was essentially forced to call a cease-fire since it was, at that time, the focal point of the international community. However, the cease-fire only stopped open fighting on the ground not aerial attacks. There are reports that document the army's raids into people's homes and the continuance of such practices as arbitrary arrests and torture during the time soldiers were present (PHR/HRW report 19).

The demands made by the Zapatistas stem from a long history of economic and social disparity between Chiapas and the rest of Mexico. The statistics alone provide a stark contrast (Wager 2):

	Mexico	Chiapas
Population in rural areas	29%	60%
Illiteracy	13%	31%
Households w/o electricity	12.5%	33.3%
Households w/o potable water	20.6%	41.6%
Lack basic sanitation	36.4%	58.8%

Overall, almost 70% of the population of Chiapas lives below the official Mexican poverty line. Despite these statistics, Chiapas does have a lot to offer:

the fertile farmlands, pastures, and forests, oil and natural gas resources, and the high production of coffee. However, this wealth is distributed very unevenly as 39% of the population makes less than the minimum wage of approximately U.S. $3.00 per day (Burbach).

By rising up, the Zapatistas "declared war on the Mexican armed forces and called on international organizations and the Red Cross to monitor under the Geneva Conventions of War. They appealed to other Mexicans to join their insurgency" (Collier 2). The Zapatistas handed out leaflets the day of the uprising which announced a "declaration of war" against the Mexican government and army. "The leaflets said that the rebels were exercising a constitutional right to take up arms as a last resort against 'more than seventy years of poverty, injustice, and exploitation,' and called on 'the other powers of the nation' to restore the rule of law and 'depose the dictator" (PHR/HWR report 7).

The rebels have received popular support: democratic trade unions, independent trade unions, peasant citizens, women, indigenous peoples, intellectuals, students, churches, coalitions, progressive political parties, and members of the international community have given their support in numerous ways. Some supporters have suffered negative consequences in their effort to promote awareness about and action for Chiapas.[1]

---

[1] During a recent visit to Cuernavaca, I attended a speech by a Mexican University student, Amarela Janik, who was expelled from her school because of her involvement in the organization of EZLN-related publicity. She wasn't

Demonstrations have been held, statements have been released, and humanitarian missions to Chiapas have been conducted to promote the demands of the Zapatistas and the end to the repression of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. The international participation in this conflict has provided needed awareness and support (ideologically and materially) for the EZLN. Without this international attention, the Zapatistas might have met an early end against the Mexican government and army.

GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

The National Commission for Human Rights

The National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) was established in 1990 under the direction of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in response to the increasing importance placed on human rights both nationally and internationally. In 1992, the Mexican constitution was amended to make the commission a legally independent government agency and to ensure its permanence. At the same time, the amendment reduced the commission's mandate to investigate violations and required that each of Mexico's 31 states establish their own commission to investigate abuses by state authorities. This delegation of responsibilities lessened the CNDH's jurisdiction in the investigations of human rights abuses, though it still hears appeals. As of 1993, state commissions became operational in 30 states. The CNDH was met with

---

involved in any form of violence or illegal acts, she simply supported the Zapatistas.

skepticism by both the national and international human rights communities, which viewed it as "a potential means of government control over the burgeoning human rights movement" (Barry 68). However, this was the first time in Mexico's history that the president publicly acknowledged the human rights problem in Mexico and created a body to stop the problem (Americas Watch 3).

The decisions made by the CNDH are not legally binding and it is proscribed from initiating legal proceedings against suspected human rights abusers. The CNDH investigates all types of human rights abuses including extrajudicial killings by the police, torture, illegal arrests, inhuman prison conditions, homicide, death threats, and the illegal deprivation of liberty. The CNDH is not allowed to investigate abuses involving labor rights, election irregularities, or cases already under jurisdiction of the courts.

Proponents of the CNDH quote statistics and relate success stories which demonstrate that the governmental agency is investigating allegations of human rights violations by government agencies, distributing public reports of its investigations, and promoting human rights education among the Mexican people (US Department of State). The US Department of State Dispatch released a human rights fact sheet in 1994 which was very favorable to the CNDH. It only provided a simplistic description of the numerous issues involved in the rebellion in Chiapas: "This primarily Indian group was protesting what it regarded as government failure to deal effectively with social and economic problems" (US Department of State).

The CNDH has not gained the credibility Salinas had hoped for; rather,

groups like Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights "lambast...the blue-ribbon National Human Rights Commission for absolving the military of wrongdoing" (Scott 6). According to a member of the Minnesota Advocates, "there were some feelings that this commission might really be just created as window dressing as opposed to something substantive that might be dealing with human rights issues" (Rohde). After the Advocates released a report which was quite critical of the activities of the CNDH with respect to their treatment of abuses committed by the Mexican military in the Mexican countryside, the CNDH was not pleased. At that time, there was an exchange of letters between the two organizations discussing this report (Rohde). However, since then, relations between the two have not been strained (Rohde).

IMPUNITY

> "My government intends to abolish impunity while at the same time assuring respect for human rights and making more efficient and honest the protection of public security and the imparting of justice." (qtd. in Americas Watch 9)
>
> ---President Salinas de Gortari

Impunity has become one of the key issues for human rights organizations working in Chiapas. Although the CNDH has produced reports that say it has found "culpability by government agencies and recommended further action by the appropriate government agencies" (US Department of

State) a report that was published by the World Policy Institute (WPI) demonstrated otherwise. The WPI report investigated the careers of eight Federal Judicial Police officers and found that while the CNDH claimed to have dismissed them for their involvement in multiple human rights violations, the officers were never prosecuted. Rather, they were reassigned to a different part of Mexico, where they were again participants in homicide, torture, disappearances, or illegal detention (Lutz 82). Their removal has been referred to as a "public-relations ploy" (Barry 69) which was carried out to pacify the general public. Sara De Kosse, a lawyer from the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights said, "Impunity has been the most difficult issue to address in Mexico. When members of the Mexican military are not held accountable for crimes, violations are not only perpetrated, but can become more and more severe over time" (Wirpsa 1).

In a report submitted by Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights the organizations revealed substantial evidence that the Mexican military personnel, the CNDH and the Office of the Attorney General ignored or covered up the responsibility of army officials for the torture and murder of three Tzeltal Indians in Chiapas and many other summary executions, tortures, arbitrary detentions and for rape. The report concluded that the "Mexican government's chief investigative agency, the federal attorney general's office, has shown greater interest in protecting the Mexican army's reputation than in conducting independent and thorough investigations of alleged military abuses in Chiapas." The government has also been accused of using torture or intimidation in order

to get a confession from someone when they have little or no evidence against that person (Lutz 82).

One of the main criticisms of the Mexican government has been its heavy reliance on the Army and subsequent dismissal of the military's human rights violations. In 1992, the military was involved in searching villages in Chiapas and detaining citizens. The army was accused of torturing some of these civilians, yet the CNDH investigated no one in relation to this incident. In response to attacks for its lack of participation in this matter, the CNDH admitted that some citizens were "physically mistreated" but medical reports indicate that no torture took place. Numerous human rights bulletins and reports have been distributed, which attribute various human rights abuses to the Mexican army, and which call for a commitment by the government to make real political, social and economical changes.

Human Rights Watch/Americas issued a report on Mexico in June 1995 which they "repeat [their] appeal to the Mexican government to investigate summary executions" and "to ensure that those responsible for these violations are brought to justice" (13). Physicians for Human Rights also called for the Mexican government to "honor its promise to put an end to impunity by identifying and prosecuting those responsible" (Annual Report 5).

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

With the progression of the human rights movement, more area and issue specific human rights organizations were created. The Inter-American

Commission on Human Rights (ICHR) was established in 1959 by the Organization of American States (OAS) to oversee the condition of human rights in the Americas. The OAS Charter of 1948 states the "fundamental rights of the individual" as one of the organization's founding principles. In 1948, the General Assembly approved the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man which serves as "the initial system of protection" for human rights in the hemisphere (Abi-Mershed 50). This Declaration was adopted "to record the commitment of the American States [and] to increasingly strengthen the protection of human rights in the Americas" (Abi-Mershed 50).

The Commission consists of seven members, nominated by member states and elected by the General Assembly of the OAS. To be the most effective, the ICHR does not act alone. While it fills the role of the fact finder and the agent for truth, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has the power to determine state responsibility; the political factions of the OAS sanction human rights violations; and the member states have the ultimate responsibility to promote and maintain their commitment to human rights.

The Commission's main tasks are investigating individual cases and questioning specific countries about their general state of human rights (Farer 38-39). The petition system begins when a complaint is made which alleges a violation of rights and the "exhaustion or inefficacy of domestic remedies" (Farer 39). After it receives the complaint, the ICHR contacts the government involved and requests comment. It used to be necessary for the ICHR to visit the involved country to resolve a general inquiry. However, due to the controversial

nature of this type of visit, they now encourage states to participate in hearings.

Farer points out that complaints are only one index of trouble; the member states and staff of the ICHR have several sources of information regarding the situations in member states (39). The commission uses its ability to prepare reports as leverage against alleged human rights violators. As soon as the commission finds out about a possible violation, they resolve to prepare a report. The concerned government is then informed of the possible report and requests an invitation to conduct observations in the concerned country. If the country doesn't invite the commission in, the ICHR formally requests permission to enter and if they are still not invited, or if the involved government is slow in making arrangements, the commission goes public with this information and continues to prepare the report. Ultimately, the commission hopes that this type of public exposure will pressure the government to change its actions.

The Commission has been troubled in three main areas: 1) politics, 2) cooperation, 3) finances (Medina 448). First, it is part of a political organization which means in order to file a report and have action taken, it must go through a series of steps to get the case looked at. In addition to this, the Commission has found a general lack of cooperation among the states they deal with, which can result in a prolonged process of writing reports, submitting them to the state in question and waiting for that state's response. Finally, the Commission has financial limitations; "The Commission inevitably makes a choice as to what it can accomplish and places a priority on tasks it perceives as most likely to increase the general respect for human rights. In this ordering, the

handling of individual complaints does not rank very high" (Medina 448).

Similar to the relationship of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and sovereignty, the ICHR seems to take a paradoxical stance on nonintervention. While the member states define nonintervention as "simply ignoring the way in which another state treats its citizens" (Farer 46) and they consider nonintervention a fundamental principle, one of the primary functions of the ICHR is to expose violations and pressure governments to change their behavior. Through the commission's work, challenging the abuses of authoritarian regimes, they continue to support the participation of democratic society while trying to aid in the democratization of the Americas (Abi-Mershed 52).

The ICHR's main objective in Mexico has been the monitoring of elections. However, they have met strong resistance from the Mexican government and have been asked to refrain from considering petitions to investigate electoral fraud from the PRD and PAN (two of the Mexican opposition parties). The Mexican government has also prohibited the ICHR from working with domestic nongovernmental organizations regarding human rights violations (Barry 64).

The Mexican government has recently begun to open up its relations with the ICHR. On February 26, 1996, the Commission announced that the ICHR will be sending an observer mission to Mexico in response to an invitation by the Mexican government. Ambassador Jose Antonio Tijerino of Nicaragua, the President of the OAS Permanent Council, said that even though most countries

of the western hemisphere are democracies, "there are still human rights violations such as disappearances, torture, abuse of states of exception, violations of due process, violence, denial of international humanitarian legal norms, and the absence of effective protection of economic, social and cultural rights" (Organization of American States "Human Rights Commission").

On April 16, 1996, Mexico's Ambassador to the OAS, Carmen Moreno de Del Cuento signed for the ratification of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economics, Social and Cultural Rights, the Protocol of San Salvador. The Protocol of San Salvador establishes the right to work, to social security, to health, to trade unions, to a healthy environment, to food, to education, to the benefits of culture, the rights of children, the protection of the elderly, the handicapped, and the family. Ambassador de Del Cuento said, "it is especially important that this protocol establishes the obligation to guarantee the exercise of all economic, social and cultural rights without discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin or economic status" (Organization of American States "Mexico"). The Ambassador also stressed the importance of the protocol towards the strengthening of the system of protection of human rights in the hemisphere.

The effects of these actions remain to be seen as human rights continue to be violated throughout Mexico, especially in Chiapas. Due to unsuccessful attempts at locating documents regarding the ICHR's involvement in Chiapas,

this issue can not be properly addressed.[2]

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The adoption of the Declaration was a symbolic acceptance of human rights as a major international issue. The construction of guidelines for investigation and discussion of human rights was carried out by various international organizations following the adoption of the Declaration. However, these formal procedures only became effective through the work of human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs). "Reflecting on the accomplishments of the United Nations in human rights over the past 50 years, it is instructive to realize that time and again it was the *nongovernmental sector* that provided the key strategic, technical, and organizational leadership for developing human rights norms and procedures. Concerned governmental representatives have carried the NGO proposals forward" (Tessitore 201).

NGOs are non-governmental, non-profit organizations which play a major role in providing reliable information to policy makers. Through their dedication and intensive work, human rights NGOs have contributed to the exposure of human rights abuses, the documentation and presentation of these findings to governmental organizations, the implementation of human rights policy, and the continued presence of human rights issues in international affairs.

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2 Telephone and written contacts with the OAS and ICHR went unanswered. Limited information was located through the organizations' home pages on the World Wide Web.

The presence of human rights NGOs in states has had considerable impact. One role they often perform is the vigilante role, a watchdog of the government. They have the resources to organize people to research and study the abuses and publish reports which condemn the culpable party. The distribution of these results are usually widespread and available to the international community in an effort to influence public opinion by increasing their awareness and understanding of the issues (Pei-heng 63). They maintain a close relationship with various governmental bodies in order to promote their work and they examine, criticize, and demand changes to governmental policies inconsistent with universal human rights.

With the increased involvement of NGOs in international affairs and in the international political arena, human rights has gained importance regarding foreign policy. In the U.S., human rights issues have become factors, albeit not yet as important as trade and economics, in foreign relations. In the case of China, the Most Favored Nation status was used in a principle public role to monitor human rights abuses. Critics thought this tactic was not strong enough to make effective changes and China felt it impinged on their sovereignty. The difficulty of achieving the balance between interference and sovereignty has kept human rights from being a critical factor in all foreign policy.

Most NGOs distribute their findings through published reports, journals, newsletters, and magazines. Those NGOs who have the capability of gathering worldwide data often publish special reports that explain in detail a certain area of interest. These reports often prompt international discussion of distinct issues

due to the extensive and often innovative research done by the NGO.

One very recent tool that has been gaining popularity with various NGOs and human rights organizations is the computer. Through news groups, electronic mail (e-mail), the World Wide Web (WWW), and Internet, various organizations have made their information available to millions internationally. The effectiveness of these different modes of communication is not easily determined. While these options have made instant news coverage available, the often excessive amounts of information make it difficult for the user to discern what is useful and what isn't. Virtually anyone can gain access to this information as well as post their own information, making it possible to find information on just about any issue imaginable. At the same time, however, this makes it possible for people to post their own opinions and ideas which may not be consistent with the issue at hand. While there are warnings and notations made to let the user know that not all postings are fact, it is entirely all too possible to confuse fact with fiction in this case.

One of the major downfalls of news groups and mass e-mailings is the amount of information sent to a subscriber. It is a very time-consuming process to sort through every mailing and decide what will be saved and what will be deleted. It can be a very overwhelming problem for people who just don't have the time or the energy to do this.

In spite of the amount of information and time involved, the computer can be an effective tool for general knowledge as well as specialized research. Human rights organizations have taken full advantage of the WWW. Individual

organizations have made available their histories, functions, reports, and ideas as well as further places to look for related articles. With one click of the mouse, it is possible to locate numerous locations which deal with human rights and human rights organizations. It can be intimidating and time consuming to find exactly what you are searching for, but it can also be rewarding when you locate a hard to find document.

The labor force of NGOs largely consists of volunteers. There are usually a few, usually underpaid people who are in charge of the organization, but the bulk of the work is done through voluntary membership. These volunteers get involved because they have a strong belief in the ideals of the organization, not because they hope to receive any tangible, material gains (Sikkink 416). The payoffs for the members are often saved lives, reductions in human rights abuses, changed policies, and other humanitarian improvements.

The following section discusses three human rights organizations and one humanitarian aid organization. Each section lays out the organization's general background information (see appendix A), structure, and philosophical foundation.

Human Rights Watch/Americas

Human Rights Watch (HRW) was founded in 1978 under the title Helsinki Watch to monitor and promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights. It was created to assist groups in Moscow, Warsaw, and Prague that were set up in compliance with the human rights arrangements of the

Helsinki accords.[3] Since then, the group has divided into five different regions covering Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, and the signatories of the Helsinki accords. It works on five collaborative projects as well: arms transfers, children's rights, free expression, prison conditions, and women's rights. HRW is currently the largest U.S.- based international human rights organization. The Human Rights Watch/Americas division was created in 1981 to monitor human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The goal of HRW "is to make governments pay a heavy price in reputation and legitimacy if they transgress the rights of their people" (HRW Q & A). They do this by "public stigmatization". Through their investigations, documentation, and publications, HRW has the ability to disseminate all of a government's human rights violations to the general public in order to "embarrass it in the eyes of its citizens and the world" (HRW Q&A). In 1988, HRW created an international film festival in order to promote public awareness of human rights through film. This type of medium has mass appeal and can reach all types of people, not simply those who seek out information regarding HRW or even human rights. It can attract the attention of people whose main objective is to view a certain film.

HRW doesn't deal only with the abusing government; they also urge for

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The Helsinki accords consist of several international agreements signed by Canada, the United States, the Soviet Union, and 32 other countries, almost all of which were European. All signatories agreed to respect human rights, including their citizens' freedoms of thought and religion, and the protection of journalists.

the withdrawal of economic, military, and diplomatic support by other governments, in hopes that this pressure will force the abusing government to change its behaviors. HRW bases its understanding of human rights on universal civil and political rights which are represented in international law and treaties. The abuses it works to end include, but are not limited to, "summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention, restrictions on the freedoms of expression, association, assembly and religion, violation of due process and discrimination on racial, gender, ethnic and religious grounds" (HRW Q&A). They also deal with war-related abuses no matter who is responsible for the conflict.

Their staff of over 100 lawyers, journalists, regional experts, and linguists "helps foster understanding of why abuses break out and, most important, what must be done to curtail them" (HRW Q&A). They not only want to *expose* and stop the abuses that are happening, they want an understanding of why abuses happen, so they can *prevent* any further abuse situations. To gain this understanding, HRW sends "fact-finding" missions to countries (i.e., China, Rwanda, Germany, Haiti, United States, former Yugoslavia, Iraq) where human rights violations occur and they maintain a presence in several countries in order to gather information on a regular basis. Along with simple observation, they conduct interviews with members of all involved parties: victims, witnesses, government officials, opposition leaders, church officials, labor leaders, journalists, lawyers, relief groups, doctors, and any others who have human rights information. To be most effective, they need to collect complete and

accurate information regarding a government's human rights record. As part of the "human rights network" discussed by Sikkink, HRW cooperates with regional human rights groups as well as with other international groups in order to collect the largest amount of information "to ensure that local human rights concerns are heard and acted upon by the international community" (HRW Q&A).

Due to its non-partisanship and its practice to "criticize abuses of human rights regardless of the political views or affiliations of those responsible", HRW does not receive funding from any government or government-funded agency. They are supported entirely by contributions from individuals and private foundations. In their effort to globalize their work, HRW hired a United Nations representative in 1993 and "began more systematic efforts to infuse [their] information and views into decision making at the World Bank" (HRW Annual Report).

Human Rights Watch/Americas (HRW/A) has been actively involved in Chiapas through conducting investigative missions to the area, collaborating with other human rights organizations in publishing reports, and working to ensure the prosecution and punishment of all parties involved in human rights abuses. In its Sept. 1991 report, Americas Watch (Human Rights Watch/Americas former name) stated concern with Mexico's continuing practices of abuse even though the law prohibits them (6). HRW/A feels that changing the law has not been enough to deter the police and Army from committing these abuses.

In 1993, before the passage of NAFTA, HRW/A urged President Clinton "not to squander the opportunity provided by the profound restructuring of

economic relations between the countries of North America to promote human rights reforms and democracy" (Human Rights Watch/Americas Watch 4). HRW/A called upon Mexico to:

> --commit to investigate fully, prosecute, and punish anyone who engages in or is responsible for human rights abuses, even if doing so exposes corruption or other misconduct at the highest levels of government;
> --provide absolute guarantees for the protection of political rights for all governmental critics and opponents;
> --make it legally possible for aggrieved individuals to apply meaningfully to independent and impartial courts for redress when their political rights, including their rights to participate in elections, are violated;
> --ensure free and fair elections in 1994 and all future elections by granting all political parties equal access to campaign financing, the media, and the use of the national colors; permitting professional, independent and impartial election observers to monitor elections and have full access to all election machinery including computers; barring the military from putting on displays of force on election day that deter voters from going to the polls; and establishing an independent, impartial electoral commission in which no political party or alliance of parties dominates and the Minister of Government plays no role. (Human Rights Watch/Americas Watch 3)

HRW/A and Physicians for Human Rights conducted research in Chiapas

from January to June 1994 and issued a report that gave recommendations to the Mexican government, Army, the Attorney General's office, the CNDH, and the EZLN (PHR and HRW/A 5-6). The report focused mainly on medical evidence the groups studied after the initial uprising. In addition to medical investigations, the groups interviewed witnesses, government officials, forensic experts, human rights advocates, and relatives of those tortured or killed in an effort to understand who was responsible for the abuses.

The report found that both sides of the initial conflict were guilty of violating the international humanitarian law according to Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (PHR and HRW/A 112). This Article states that all civilians and those not taking part in a conflict are to be protected and fundamental human rights are to be respected in every situation. PHR and HRW/A discovered the EZLN had violated this Article by shooting and killing noncombatants and holding civilians hostage during the conflict (113). The Army was found guilty of "summary executions of wounded or captured combatants, and of civilians in detention; widespread arbitrary arrest, prolonged incommunicado detention, and torture; excessive use of lethal force; and violations of medical neutrality" (114). In spite of their findings, not one officer was identified or held responsible for these offenses. Because the Mexican government did not call for a state of emergency in response to the uprising, the actions of the Mexican Army were completely unconstitutional. After their investigations, PHR and HRW/A concluded that the Mexican government, Army, CNDH, and Attorney General's Office failed to investigate the violations brought

forward by the report in "an impartial, thorough, and timely manner" (4).

Physicians for Human Rights

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) was founded in 1986 and uses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights and humanitarian agreements to establish its procedural framework. Its membership base consists of medical professionals, forensic scientists, and concerned citizens who volunteer their medical knowledge and skill to "investigate" and "prevent" human rights violations as well as violations of international humanitarian law. They also give emergency medical care to those in need, when possible.

PHR investigates a variety of abuses and gives precedence to issues such as: "torture, disappearances, and political killings by governments and opposition groups" (PHR Statement of Purpose) and "violations of medical neutrality" (PHR Annual Report 2) . They focus on the health and medical issues regarding human rights violations by investigating "health and sanitary conditions in prisons and detention centers" (PHR Statement of Purpose). They believe everyone, regardless of what side of the issue they are on, has the right to receive medical care during times of war. They also investigate how human rights violations affect people physically and psychologically. PHR realizes the danger that health care professionals put themselves in by getting involved in areas of conflict, so they are committed to protecting those professionals who are victims of human rights abuses.

As a member of the international human rights network, PHR has collaborated with groups such as HRW/A to promote various campaigns, most importantly the "Worldwide Ban on Landmines". They are also very involved with the education and training of health professionals, human rights workers, and members of the judiciary in order to advance their means of using medical and forensic skills to investigate human rights violations. In order to promote human rights awareness, PHR frequently gives presentations to universities, medical schools, and professional meetings; in 1994, PHR members and staff gave over 40 presentations (PHR Annual Report 9).

PHR focuses on finding those accountable for committing abuses and works to prevent any further instances of abuse. Their goal is to "seek justice" for the victims of human rights abuses as well as their families. The evidence that PHR gathers has a very important and unique effect which differentiates its work from those human rights organizations who focus mainly on gathering statistics. PHR has the ability to gather physical evidence, "evidence that is hard to refute, never forgets, and is not absent because witnesses are" (PHR Organization). They use this physical evidence along with documentary evidence to hold the concerned government accountable. This tactic not only exposes the violations and publicly humiliates the responsible party, it "provides the most secure foundation for future respect for human rights" (PHR Organization).

PHR's main concern is the "medical consequences" of human rights violation. Therefore, they are completely impartial and conduct their medical

activities regardless of any political affiliations or ideologies of the responsible government or group. Through its medical and technological abilities, PHR tries to accomplish justice for the victims of human rights abuse.

"PHR has established a database of health professionals and other experts who are willing to serve as mission participants, provide medical expertise, review PHR publications, organize fundraising events, conduct medical examinations of persons seeking asylum in the United States, and write letters on issues of concern" (PHR Annual Report 11). The success of PHR is due to this database who volunteer their time and to the generous monetary contributions of donors.

In Chiapas, their "goal was to assist in the indictment of the Mexican army for extrajudicial executions, disappearances, and torture of civilians there" (personal communication, November 6, 1995). They performed numerous medical examinations and focused mainly on cases in the cities of Ocosingo and Morelia. As mentioned earlier, they collaborated with HRW/A on a 159-page report which called on President Zedillo to indict "army personnel responsible for the summary executions and torture of dozens of civilians during and after the Indian uprising" (Wirpsa 1).

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (Advocates) was founded in 1983 for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. Currently, it is comprised of over 1200 members; 10-12 of those members are paid staff and

the rest are volunteers. The volunteer base has a variety of people ranging from high school students to professionals such as doctors and lawyers.

The Advocates have specialized programs which focus on representing people directly. Currently they have a program that works with and represents people seeking asylum and refugee status in the US. Another program they have works on behalf of Death Row inmates in the US. Both of these programs are matters of direct legal representation. Although they haven't utilized the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court system, it is a viable possibility for the future.

The Advocates are hoping to begin a program that examines child mortality (Rohde). This program would investigate child mortality rates to see if there is a relationship between these rates and human rights abuses. "We're going to be examining cases and rates of child mortality in different countries, different areas, including areas within the US, determining if the rates are bad with mortality and if that can be a violation of human rights standards" (Rohde).

Clifford C. Rohde is the Director of Mexico Project, one of the specialized programs of the Advocates. Essentially, Mexico Project was created to fill a void. The Advocates have a program which focuses on a "mystery" country; a country where there doesn't seem to be much human rights documentation at that time. In 1989, Mexico wasn't receiving much international attention regarding their human rights record save for a report released by Amnesty International in 1986 and their follow-up attention. Advocates saw this need for exposure and sent a lawyer to Mexico for a few months to collect data and release a report (Rohde).

Unless otherwise noted, the following statements are reflective of both Advocates in general and Mexico Project.

Minnesota Advocates/Mexico Project

The mission of these groups is based largely on the International Bill of Human Rights and a variety of other international covenants that define human rights. When asked how he defines human rights, Rohde commented on the evolution of the human rights movement which he's noticed. "Traditionally there has been a dichotomy of rights; sometimes called negative rights and positive rights. The negative rights meaning rights against the government, 'the government can't do this, the government cannot kill, the government cannot torture, the government cannot disappear you, cannot jail you for prolonged and arbitrary periods.' Those are the types of rights that Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights has traditionally worked on...and also that most international rights groups have worked on. Eastern Bloc (Socialist) rights are more social, cultural, and economic rights. I think the rights movement is moving somewhat out of that dichotomy and groups are beginning to examine other types of rights like economic, social, and cultural rights" (Rohde).

Rohde noted a clear relation of rights; there is overlap in several different areas. "If a government is doing its job and observing rights than citizens are not only not being killed and not being thrown in jail arbitrarily, but also people are being allowed to kind of express themselves culturally and socially and also have somewhat of an equitable distribution of wealth" (Rohde).

The Advocates carry out several different roles. First and foremost, they

bring world wide attention to various human rights violations by investigating and exposing them. Their basic goal is to stop human rights abuses wherever they are working. They use many methods to accomplish this, but the normal pattern is to investigate them, denounce them, publicize the findings and inform as many people as possible about what's going on in "X" country or "Y" issues. Their information is targeted at all possible groups including: media, politicians, policy makers, librarians and academics. They send human rights' teachers to classrooms to teach kids of all ages and they also hold Continuing Legal Education seminars for lawyers. They sign on to or write Amicus Curie briefs that are given to the courts who are hearing human rights cases (Rohde).

In Mexico, they have a particular advantage over Mexican NGOs (NGOs based in Mexico). Because they were not created by a governmental institution and because their funding comes from private sources, the Advocates enjoy a certain amount of freedom in their work. "We are not really limited in any kind of way by say, domestic policies or events within Mexico or even in the US for that matter. We pretty much have the ability to call things as we see them" (Rohde). This is a type of sovereignty which the other NGOs I've discussed share as well.

Unlike the CNDH, which is virtually controlled by the Mexican government and is not allowed to freely express itself, international NGOs have more access to human rights situations. Of course, they must work within the confines of international conventions and to some degree within the laws of the country they work in. However, this in no way discounts the value that Mexican NGOs have. In addition to the work they do for their specific organization, they often have

relationships with other international NGOs. The Advocates often depend on the "collegial" relationship they have with Mexican NGOs. In addition to providing the Advocates with information such as reports they've written, cases they've documented, and specific "insider" observations they've made, Mexican NGOs provide assistance when the Advocates have a mission on the ground (Rohde). In these cases, Mexican NGOs can assist the Advocates with setting up interviews, meeting key people, and arranging the mission (Rohde).

In addition to obtaining information from first hand missions and interviews with people, the Advocates maintain their relationships with Mexican NGOs via e-mail, regular mail, telephone, and fax. They regularly monitor information posted on the Internet and they subscribe to numerous publications regarding the issues they deal with. This type of information gathering is essential to stay current with human rights situations and the human rights network.

Commission of Nongovernmental Organizations for Peace

The Commission of Nongovernmental Organizations for Peace (CONPAZ) is a Mexican "umbrella" non-governmental human rights organization located in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas. It consists of 12 different NGOs who, prior to the January 1, 1994 uprising, worked with Chiapan farming and indigenous communities. Since the rebellion, CONPAZ has provided "emergency supplies, medical aid and human rights advocacy to populations worst affected by the war" (Shapiro).

CONPAZ's location gives it a special advantage over other organizations.

It is one of the only NGOs in Mexico that is able to keep a constant presence in the conflict zone in order to continually monitor and denounce human rights violations. It notes itself as being able to "remain in constant communication with affected communities [and] offer international visibility to its member NGOs" (Shapiro).

CONPAZ has created several different programs to aid the local communities of Chiapas, including:

--human rights workshops for children and adults;

--health training and support

--the introduction of sustainable gardening and farm animal projects;

--an indigenous women's forum on their constitutional and human rights. (Shapiro)

Pastors for Peace

Pastors for Peace was created as a peaceful response to a violent act.[4] Pastors staff consists of only eight people, but they are supported by volunteers in about 200 U.S. cities and 30 Canadian cities with additional branches in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala and Cuba (Gibeau 11). The title doesn't require that volunteers be of a certain, or of any, religious faith; rather,

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On August 2, 1988, Reverend Lucius Walker, Jr., executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, was wounded by contra terrorists in Nicaragua (Pastors Action). His immediate response to this was to create a non-violent humanitarian aid caravan, Pastors for Peace, to aid the poor and oppressed.

the organization believes anyone "who works for peace with justice is a 'pastor' for peace" (Pastors Action).

Pastors for Peace is different from the aforementioned inter-governmental and non-governmental human rights groups in some very important ways. These differences in no way discount the ability or the success of Pastors, they simply place them at a different location on the international involvement continuum. Pastors' main functions are to educate the citizens of the United States about the plight of their "neighbors to the south" and to bring material assistance to those in need.

Pastors supports U.S. foreign policies which are consistent with the Judeo-Christian ethic. They offer alternatives to policies which are not and refuse to seek U.S. governmental assistance in their caravans when they believe the U.S. is the cause of the oppression. While they feel that the U.S. has "special obligations" to assist those in need because it is "the most powerful nation", they do not encourage charity which can "create unhealthy dependency relationships" (Pastors Action). They promote a foreign policy based on "mutual respect, economic justice, and universal human rights" (Pastors Action). Rather than perpetuating existing "dependency relationships", Pastors works to empower the citizens of countries, giving them assistance to improve themselves socially, politically, and economically.

Pastors work is largely based on its people-to-people caravans. These caravans serve two main functions: material aid and education. The material aid is brought to the concerned areas by trucks which travel along 8 to 14 routes

through the U.S. during a twelve day period (Pastors Action). Although the material aid they begin with in addition to that which they collect on their route is very important, Pastors believes its most important work is done through educational events and press conferences held in the U.S. Through these events, they gain grassroots support for what they call the "People's Foreign Policy" (Pastors's alternative policy to U.S. foreign policy). Pastors maintains that the only way to achieve agreement between current U.S. foreign policy and the values which they should reflect (mutual respect, economic justice, and universal human rights) is to get the majority of the people to understand "the real impact of our government's actions abroad." "In this sense, organizing and educating here at home are the most important activities of Pastors for Peace" (Pastors Action).

Pastors began its program in Chiapas in January, 1995 in response "to the urgent call of indigenous people for the presence and solidarity of the international community" (Pastors Chiapas). They work in conjunction with the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, the Fray Bartolomé Center for Human Rights, CONPAZ and the Para Todos Todo (For Everybody, Everything) Caravan.

Pastors has three projects in Chiapas: 1) Human Rights Delegations, 2) Humanitarian Aid Caravans, 3) Civilian Encampments, which "are designed to increase the presence of the international community, raise awareness about the indigenous struggle throughout the U S and assuage the severe shortages of food and medicines that plague the region" (Pastors Chiapas).

Humanitarian Aid Caravans

As mentioned earlier, the Pastors for Peace caravans raise awareness throughout the United States and the receiving country. In Chiapas, the caravans focus on the "indigenous struggle for justice, dignity and peace while addressing the shortages of food, medicine and school supplies that exist in the region" (Pastors Chiapas). The February 9, 1995 Mexican army offensive against rural indigenous communities resulted in the destruction of crops, occupation of villages and the prohibition of travel, among other consequences. These results directly influenced the immediate shortage of food in the Chiapas countryside. In addition to the region's "chronic shortage of health professionals and medicines" (Pastors Chiapas), this lack of food posed a lethal threat to the indigenous people of Chiapas.

Pastors also focuses on education as one of the main crises in Chiapas. Like the health care industry, the educational system is suffering a severe shortage of staff and funding from the Mexican government (Pastors Chiapas). Volunteers have been working in the countryside to fill that void, but it is difficult due to the shortage of school supplies such as books, paper, and pencils. Through their caravans, Pastors hopes to bring emergency aid and an international presence to Chiapas.

Human Rights Delegations

Pastors encourages people from all areas (churches, schools, communities) to participate in monthly delegations to Chiapas in order to become educated about the activities of the Mexican army and the "dynamics of the

indigenous struggle for land, liberty and democracy" (Pastors Chiapas). These delegations travel to communities within the 'conflict zone' and document human rights abuses in an effort to "raise awareness about human rights abuses in Chiapas throughout Mexico and the United States" (Pastors Chiapas).

It's important to note that the mere presence of these delegations can be powerful. Their presence as international observers provides a "measure of protection" from Mexican soldiers based in and around the communities. The delegations extend this observer role to the peace process by being present at peace talks between the EZLN and the Mexican government. Pastors feels the "presence of international observers encourages both sides to continue on the path towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict and illustrates the international impact of events in this small state in southern Mexico" (Pastors Chiapas).

Civilian Encampments

Civilian Encampments for Peace are also based on the idea that international involvement at the local level will increase the awareness of both the Mexican government and the international community as to the severity of the situation in Chiapas. People who live in Civilian Encampments for Peace address the same issues as members of Pastors' other programs: educational programs for young people, monitoring military activity, documenting human rights abuses, and distributing emergency relief aid (Pastors Chiapas).

Pastors relies on the staff at the Fray Bartolomé Center for Human Rights and CONPAZ for member services such as orientation to the area and debriefing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENTS OF FEB. 9, 1995

On February 9, 1995, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo issued a new campaign against the Zapatistas and the indigenous communities of Chiapas. He called for the arrests of five alleged Zapatistas, including Sub-Commander Marcos, whom he claimed to know the identity of. An estimated 60,000 troops were deployed to occupy villages in Chiapas, and human rights offices, such as CONPAZ and Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Center, were ransacked. It was reported that members of CONPAZ were followed by the police when they left their offices shortly before the raid (Amnesty International).

According to his televised speech to the nation, Zedillo's directive to the army was in response to the discovery of EZLN arms caches in Mexico City and Veracruz state on February 8. He stated that along with the arms, the federal agents also found EZLN plans to initiate "new and greater acts of violence" in Mexico (Facts on File 98). The U.S. State Department backed Zedillo's decision to send in the army against the EZLN so long as the army showed "restraint, respect for human rights and full compliance with the legal process" (Facts on File 98).

It was difficult to gauge whether or not the army was following the suggestions of the U.S. State Department. According to Martín Morales (personal communication April 10, 1996), who participated in an observer mission to Chiapas, the further militarization of the state violated the rights of the people because Zedillo's directive was merely a police action, not an act of war. The army denied human rights observers and reporters their right to free transit

by enforcing complete military enclosures around areas they occupied.

The International Human Rights Commission visited Chiapas for thirteen days after Zedillo called for a military sweep in search of Zapatistas. In the report they distributed, they documented numerous offenses by the Army against the civilians, including: cases of torture, forced confessions, destruction of personal articles, ransacked houses, road blockades, and denied access to water (Zerbo). The presence of the Army alone kept farmers from tending their crops and from collecting basics such as water and firewood. The IHRC interviewed several civilians who reported being interviewed, interrogated, and accused of being members of the EZLN by the Army.

On February 14, 1995, Zedillo ordered the army to discontinue the offensive operations they had begun only 5 days earlier. He wanted to resume the EZLN-government negotiations through peace talks which hadn't taken place for almost a year.[5] In an effort to restore peace while maintaining government control, Zedillo offered amnesty to all EZLN members who disarmed.

According to Cecilia Rodriguez (personal communication, April 17, 1996), the United States spokesperson for the Zapatistas, there are still eighteen people, mostly indigenous and between the ages of 20 and 25, who remain in prison in Mexico City and Chiapas from this time. Many of these people are

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[5] Negotiations had temporarily resumed January 15 when Interior Minister Esteban Moctezuma met with Subcommander Marcos, but when a follow-up meeting remained elusive, Zedillo warned the Zapatistas on February 5 that "the government was prepared to exercise other options to end the conflict" (Facts on File 97).

innocent civilians who happened to agree with the Zapatistas, yet they've been identified and persecuted. The Mexican Constitution states that no individual may be held longer than a year without formal charges against them, yet the government has not been able to substantiate charges against these eighteen. This is a blatant denial of the imprisoned peoples' rights.

RESPONSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AMERICAS

On February 10, 1995, HRW/A released a response to the activities of February 9 which covered four main points. They called on the Zedillo government to require that the Mexican police and army troops "carry out the arrests of leaders of the Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional (EZLN) with full respect for their human rights and rights of the civilian population" (HRW/A "on Chiapas"). They reflected on the serious abuses committed by the government during the initial uprising of the rebels and stated the need for compliance with international human rights standards during these arrests.

This response, which was widely distributed over the Internet, met some criticism. According to one person, the point of the HRW/A letter was to say "the Zapatistas should be arrested, albeit peacefully" (Story). A spokesperson for Mexican Exiles for Democracy said that by appealing to a Mexican government which was illegally arresting alleged Zapatistas, HRW/A "violated the cornerstone of neutrality by siding with one of the parties at war, by considering the other party common criminals" (Melgoza).

HRW/A second point was that Zedillo wasn't specific enough in his orders

for arrest. The call for the arrests of alleged Zapatistas left too much room for arbitrary arrests and searches (i.e. CONPAZ offices). Also, the presence of the Army had tended to make problems worse in past conflicts rather than ease tensions.

HRW/A calls on the Zedillo government to allow the protection of human rights monitors so they may access all areas in order to have complete reporting of abuses and events. Finally, they urge the Clinton administration to "monitor vigorously events in the region, to condemn any abuses at the time they occur and to call for prosecutions where warranted" (HRW/A "on Chiapas").

One year after the arrests occurred, HRW/A released a statement regarding the military violations which took place during the military sweep. They called on President Zedillo to "ensure that such abuses are fully and quickly prosecuted" (Human Rights Watch "Mexico"). HRW/A notes that Zedillo has publicly recognized Mexico's human rights and impunity problems and calls on his government to "undertake a concerted effort to convert formal human rights safeguards and official human rights policy statements into real human rights protections and the punishment of human rights violators" (Human Rights Watch "Mexico").

RESPONSE OF CONPAZ

The CONPAZ offices in San Cristobal de las Casas were forcibly searched during the military offensive on February 9, 1995. They reported that approximately 30 "heavily armed" members of the Federal Judicial Police "broke

doors, furniture and destroyed files" and followed some of the office workers home (IPS).

Following this incident, CONPAZ released a statement which reconfirmed its mission "to continue working against violence and for the human rights of the population" (IPS). They also hoped the violent attack by the Police wasn't the beginning of a "harassment campaign" against human rights organizations.

After the continued advancement and occupation by the military, CONPAZ stated "deep concern over the physical and psychological integrity of the people of the region" (Cleaver) and urged for the retreat of the military to positions held on February 1994, when negotiations began.

In reaction to the military occupation of several areas in Chiapas and the breakdown of peaceful dialogue between the EZLN and the government, CONPAZ reported "thousands of indigenous people in the areas which include the municipalities of Ocosingo, Las Margaritas and Altamirano, escaped to the mountains seeking refuge from the threats they felt with the presence of the Federal Army" (Fray Bartolomé and CONPAZ). In addition to the fear and lack of security these people felt due to the military presence, many were experiencing deterioration in their health due to their lack of supplies.

Many people began returning to their homes in an effort to relieve their health problems, yet there were reports among the displaced people of "children and pregnant women who have died because of starvation and disease" (Fray Bartolomé and CONPAZ). CONPAZ, in coordination with the Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Center and the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico,

began a campaign for Civilian Peace Camps that would be "well coordinated, that can help the population in danger, that monitor the situation in different parts of the region and that in their development and in their hope for a peace with justice and dignity are supportive of the communities' own process" (Fray Bartolomé and CONPAZ). Cecilia Rodriguez said the peace camps have also helped outside observers gain a thorough understanding of what is really happening during the low-intensity war in Chiapas ("Struggle").

RESPONSE OF PASTORS FOR PEACE

Fifteen members of Pastors for Peace joined with members of the Caravan Mexicana from Mexico and members from a delegation in Spain to form an international human rights delegation. This delegation traveled within Chiapas during the time of military occupation in February 1995 and documented what they observed.

Throughout the mission, the group frequently encountered military checkpoints in occupied regions. The group leaders protested having military escorts enter these regions with them because this would impinge on their ability to act as an "impartial observer delegation" (Pastors for Peace Report). The military also recorded group members' names and identification information and requested the reason for their presence. At one checkpoint, the military videotaped the members, with "special emphasis on the Mexican members" (Pastors for Peace Report). In spite of the heightened security, the group didn't report any confrontations between the Mexican military and the EZLN.

One of the most obvious results of the military intervention, which was seen by every group who traveled to Chiapas at this time, was the fear among the population. Through discussions and interviews with the townspeople, the delegation found that the military had blatantly rejected the peoples' requests by camping in their fields. This not only affected the people psychologically, it affected their ability to do their work; the fields where the military camped were used to graze cattle. In addition, the delegation found several homes which had been broken into, personal items which had been damaged, water lines that had been cut, and people who had been abused (Pastors for Peace Report).

The delegation also visited the governor's office to demand a response for the military actions, especially for the roadblocks (personal communication with M. Morales, April 10, 1996). They also met with some of the former prisoners who were accused of being Zapatista leaders and with actual Zapatistas through meetings set up by CONPAZ to gain an understanding of what they had gone through.

COMPARISON OF THE GROUPS

Based on information I received from each group and information that I collected through traditional means[6] , I place each group in one of three categories in relation to their work in Chiapas: Progressive, Moderate, and Conservative. Several factors were looked at in formulating these categories:

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[6] i.e. Library research and Internet research

type of work done in Chiapas, frequency of work done in Chiapas, interaction with concerned parties (EZLN, Mexican civilians, and Mexican government) ,and recommendations made by the groups.

PROGRESSIVE

CONPAZ

Even though my research on CONPAZ was limited due to a lack of resources, the small amount of information I did obtain was enough to categorize them as progressive. CONPAZ is very active in observing and documenting human rights violations as well as creating programs to help the people of Chiapas. There location places them right in the heart of the conflict, which allows them to remain in constant communication with the concerned parties as well as react quickly to human rights violations.

The fact that the Mexican military made the effort on Feb. 9th, 1995 to break into the CONPAZ office and destroy what was there demonstrates how the Mexican government feels threatened by the work CONPAZ does. CONPAZ is a force which the government fears. They have the methods to expose the wrongs of the government and they aren't afraid to use them.

In addition to denouncing the government's actions, CONPAZ has created several programs to aid the people who are affected by the conflict. They not only want the violations to stop, they are willing to be active participants in the process of change.

PASTORS FOR PEACE

In addition to their caravans, Pastors has sent people on fact-finding missions to Chiapas and works closely with organizations located in Chiapas. Their humanitarian aid gives desperately needed goods to people who have almost nothing. They are helping out people whose needs are not being adequately met by the government.

Pastors' method has been to support peace in Chiapas more than to publicly denounce the Mexican government for their actions. I think their actions in Mexico demonstrate their feelings about the government and the military. Their persistence in getting through military blockades and their demand to investigate without military accompaniment demonstrates that they don't trust the military to be impartial.

Like CONPAZ, Pastors for Peace has been under close watch by the government of Mexico. During one of their visits to the conflict zone, some of the members were attacked by people they suspected of being involved with the government. This shows that the government is aware of their work and wants to deter Pastors from any further involvement.

PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

I am placing PHR between the "progressive" and "moderate" categories. They have done extensive medical work in Chiapas which has uncovered instances of military abuse and subsequent impunity. They have also called on all involved parties to abide by the laws as stated by international human rights

conventions.

Although their work has been very effective in proving human rights violations, I hesitate to call it progressive because of it's limited scope. They aren't actively involved in the overall situation in Chiapas and they haven't worked to implement any programs to support the civilians or to promote change.

MODERATE

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AMERICAS

HRW/A has been very active in observing and documenting human rights violations in Chiapas. They have also done a lot of work (observer delegations and publications) with other organizations. However, their recommendations to involved parties and their reaction to the Feb. 9, 1995 incident have been moderate to not progressive. Whereas their reports demonstrate the need for change, HRW/A limits themselves to making recommendations rather than get actively involved.

By neglecting to condemn the government for the unfounded arrests of alleged Zapatistas, HRW/A tacitly approved them. Instead of denouncing the government's obvious wrongdoings, HRW/A called for the government to comply with international human rights standards during the arrests. This response displayed HRW/A's unwillingness to take advantage of such a critical event to make a strong statement against the Mexican government and its activities.

CONSERVATIVE

MINNESOTA ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The Advocates work with Mexico in very general terms, without much specific work related to Chiapas. In fact, during a phone conversation with the director of their Mexico Project, I was told they didn't maintain a presence in Chiapas and they didn't feel the need to focus much attention on Chiapas because there were other organizations working there (personal communication 19 Feb 1996). When I requested specific documents regarding their reaction to the Feb. 9, 1995 events, they mailed me several bulletins distributed by other groups and the information regarding their group was very vague.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Whereas the CNDH has worked on numerous cases of human rights violations in Chiapas, its scope of action is severely limited. Even though the commission works to uncover abuses, it's power to take legal action is non-existent. The creation of the CNDH was an attempt by the Mexican government to show its commitment to human rights, but the CNDH hasn't been an instrumental force in decreasing rights violations. Every move of the CNDH is carefully scrutinized by the government. This prohibits them from being able to conduct impartial and truly effective investigations.

INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

I had much difficulty trying to locate any document regarding the ICHR's involvement in Chiapas. Internet searches proved unsuccessful even though the

Commission has its own home page. The coverage of Mexico as a whole was scarce and focused mainly on what the ICHR planned to do there rather than what they had already done.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 was the first major document to address issues concerning every person's universal rights. Although agreed about in theory, human rights didn't play a prominent role in most Latin American countries until the past two decades. As is evident with the documentation produced since the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico has still not committed to following acceptable human rights practices.

Human rights have received more attention in Mexico since the 1980s due to the increased amount of and participation of human rights organizations. With the turn towards democratization in the western hemisphere, human rights improved in countries that had formerly been focused on by human rights groups. This gave human rights groups the opportunity to target "more ambiguous situations of endemic violations of human rights under formally elected governments" (Sikkink 431). At this time, the CNDH did not exist and there were no human rights NGOs available to contact.

Whereas human rights practices did begin to improve in Mexico in the late 1980s, it was difficult to discern if there was a real change happening. In their 1990 report on human rights conditions in Mexico, Americas Watch (now known as Human Rights Watch/Americas) stated, "More often than not, Mexico is

overlooked when lists of countries that violate internationally recognized human rights are compiled. That this is so is more a testament to the Mexican government's careful cultivation of its pro-human rights image than its care to ensure that individual human rights are respected" (Americas Watch 1).

1990 proved to be an important year for human rights in Mexico. Negotiations about NAFTA were underway which pressured the US to consider Mexico's human rights record and pressured Mexico to make some changes. The creation of the CNDH was one of those changes. This was an effective way to "defuse the issue by making it appear that the Mexican government had its human rights problem under control" (Sikkink 433).

What was the single most important reason Mexico was put under such intense examination? The increase in amount of human rights organizations. These organizations began to form networks, giving them the ability to increase public awareness/interest and the support they needed to conduct effective investigations. The most important work NGOs do is use their research and documentation to work with other regional and international governmental agencies to promote awareness and create change. Much of the progress that has been made in the human rights area can be attributed to the work NGOs have done in coordination with the work of other regional and international organizations and their persistence in working with governmental agencies.

As documented by the human rights organizations discussed in this paper, human rights violations continue in Chiapas. Until there is a real shift in political power in Mexico or until the international community places enough

pressure on Mexico to change its practices[7], the Mexican government will most likely get away with only agreeing with human rights in theory, but not in practice.

By raising the international community's awareness of the universality of human rights, human rights networks have the potential to reshape sovereignty (Sikkink 441). Once the definition of sovereignty allows for the idea that human rights are not solely a domestic concern but a necessary and legitimate concern of the international community, real change can be made in Mexico as well as the entire international community.

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7 For example, NAFTA could provide the US with the political opportunity to have a real affect on Mexico's human rights practices. If Mexico's human rights record becomes too extreme for the US government, the US government's economic and trade influence could cause Mexico to change its practices.

APPENDIX A

STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

Founding Principle

Staff

Principal Agenda

Goal

Mode of Operations

Reporting techniques

Involvement in Chiapas

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND ON GROUP--
1) When was the group formed?
2) What were the reasons for its formation?
3) Who established it?
4) What is the group's mission?
5) How does your group define Human Rights?
6) Is your group partisan?
7) What types of abuses do you observe and work to stop?

MAKEUP OF GROUP--
1) Approximately how many people are members?
2) Of those, how many people are paid staff and how many volunteers?
3) Where does money to fund your group come from?
4) What is your annual revenue?
5) What standards do you use to do your work? (Universal Declaration, treaties)

GROUP'S WORK--
1) Where does the group do its work (Geographically)? With whom (other NGO's, w/policy--domestic and/or foreign)?
2) What methods/tactics do you use to stop the abuses you uncover?
---non-military support, protests, funding, observe/document, books, reports, WWW, publicity
3) Who is your published info. aimed at and why?
4) How do you collect your information?
5) What is your part/influence in the Human Rights network?
----Who do you work with around the world?

CHIAPAS
1) When did you get involved w/Chiapas? Why?
2) How have you gotten involved? (Observation/action)
3) How have you interacted with the government?
4) What are your goals in Chiapas?
5) How have you worked w/other HR groups to accomplish your goals?
6) What limitations have you encountered in Chiapas? From govt or EZLN?
7) Is your group sympathetic towards the political program of the EZLN?
8) How did your group react to the Feb. 1995 arrest of people who were considered Zapatistas?
9) Have you maintained a presence in Chiapas? How?
10) What has been the Mexican government's response to groups getting involved in Chiapas?

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (SPANISH)

1) ¿Cuándo era creado la organización?
2) ¿Qué eran las razones para su formación?
3) ¿Quíen lo creado la organización?
4) ¿Cuál es la función de la organización?
5) ¿Cuál es su definición de los derechos humanos?
6) ¿La organización esta involucrado en algún partído político?
7) ¿Cuántas personas son miembros de su organización? ¿Cuántas grupos?
8) ¿Cuántos miembros de la organización son pagados y cuántos son volantarios?
9) ¿De dónde vienen sus fondos para el funcionamiento de su organización?
10) ¿Cuál es su ingreso anual?
11) ¿Ustedes usan la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos o convenios nacionales o internacionales como un criterio para su trabajo?
12) ¿Geograficamente, dónde trabaja su organización?
13) ¿Con que otras organizaciones que tienen funcionamiento en los derechos humanos trabaja su organización? ¿Ya sea política nacional o internacional?
14) ¿Cuales son los métodos que usa su organización para parar los abusos de los derechos humanos?
15) ¿A quienes están dirigidos la información publicada por su organización?
16) ¿Cómo es su información colectado?
17) ¿Cuándo empezaron a involucrarse en Chiapas? ¿Porqué?
18) ¿Cómo se han involucrado?
19) ¿Cómo se han comunicado con el gobierno méxicano?
20) ¿Cuales son sus objetivos en Chiapas?
21) ¿Cómo han trabajado con las otras organizaciones de los derechos humanos para llegar al objetivo deseado por ustedes?
22) ¿Cuales son las limitaciones que han enfrentado en Chiapas? ¿(del Gobierno y del EZLN)?
23) ¿Cómo han mantenido la presencia de ustedes en Chiapas?
24) ¿Cuales son las respuestas del gobierno méxicano refiriendose a las organizaciones de los derechos humano que se han involucrado en Chiapas?

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