

Timeline

1520 - Smallpox, introduced by Spanish colonists, reduces the indigenous population by 80%.

1524 - Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado arrives in El Salvador to continue the Spanish conquest of the Americas, but is repelled by Pipil warriors.

1525 - Spanish conquer and establish San Salvador.

1540 - El Salvador becomes a Spanish colony after the last of the indigenous resistance is suppressed.

1821 - After repeated insurrections and unrest throughout Central America, Spain capitulates and signs the Deed of Independence, freeing El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Mexican state of Chiapas.

1823 - El Salvador joins the United Provinces of Central America with Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

1840 - Following the dissolution of the United Provinces of Central America, El Salvador becomes completely independent.

1932 - The Salvadoran government led by Agustine Farabundo Martí kills 30,000 peasants in a brutal suppression known as “La Matanza” (The Massacre).

1961 - A military coup results in the right-wing political party Partido de Concertación Nacional (PCN) coming to power. A paramilitary group, the Organizacion Democratica Nacionalista (ORDEN) is established for “civil defense”.

1969 - Thousands of Salvadoran immigrants are expelled from Honduras, resulting in a four day-long ‘Football War’, which strengthens the Salvadoran military and disrupts trade. ORDEN is led by Colonel Jose Medrano and the military and comprised of peasants. ORDEN gathers intelligence and is responsible for intimidating, murdering, torturing and committing human rights violations against the civilian population.

1973 - Oil Crisis increases the price of food and lowers agricultural output, increasing inequality and social unrest.

1977 - PCN candidate Carlos Humberto Romero elected president. Left-wing Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) intensifies guerrilla activities in response to government troops’ human rights violations and death squads.

1979-1981 - Approximately 30,000 people are killed by military backed right-wing death squads.

1979 - Revolutionary Government Junta (JRG), comprised of reformist military officers, ousts President Romero in an attempt to quell army-backed political violence, to no avail.

1980 - US Government gives \$5.7 million to the JRG-controlled Salvadoran military. Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador and human rights advocate, is assassinated by former Army Major Roberto D’Abuison. Sniper attacks and bombings on Romero’s 250,000 funeral attendees results in 42 deaths and over 200 wounded. José Napoleón Duarte is elected the first civilian president since 1932. Over 600 civilians killed by the National Guard, the Honduran military, and ORDEN in the Sumpul River Massacre. National guard rapes and murders four US nuns and a laywoman on a relief mission in El Salvador.

1981 - Martial law declared and new curfew regulations imposed. Over 168 people killed by security forces in one month for violating curfew. Eighty-three decapitations performed between August 20-25th by a death squad using a guillotine. Over 733 civilians killed by the US Army School-trained Atlacatl Battalion in the village of El Mozote.

1982 - The left boycotts elections resulting in an ARENA (National Republican Alliance)-dominated right wing coalition winning parliamentary elections. Government forces kill about 8,000 civilians per year between 1982 and 1983.

1984 - Duarte wins election and seeks to negotiate with FMLN.

1987 - Head of the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, Herbert Ernesto Anaya, is assassinated.

1989 - ARENA candidate Alfredo Cristiani elected president in questionable elections. FMLN begins campaign of selective assassinations; right-wing death squad activity increases.

1992 - UN-sponsored Chapultepec peace accord ends 12-year civil war that left 75,000 dead and about 8,000 disappeared. FMLN is recognized as a legal political party.

1993 - Individuals implicated in human rights atrocities by UN Commission are given amnesty by the Salvadoran government.

1994 - ARENA candidate Armando Calderon Sol elected president. FMLN is the second largest political party.

1997 - FMLN wins seats in parliamentary elections. Left leaning Hector Silva elected mayor of San Salvador.

1998 - Abortion is banned with no exceptions.

1999 - ARENA candidate Francisco Flores wins elections against former guerilla Facundo Guardado dividing FMLN.

2001 - Earthquakes kill 1,200 people and leaves a million more homeless. US dollar becomes Salvadoran currency.

2002 - US Court orders two former Salvadoran army generals to compensate victims \$54.6 million for human rights atrocities.

2003 - El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala enter a free trade agreement with the US.

2004 - ARENA candidate Antonio Gonzalez elected president.

2005 - Organization of American States (OAS) human rights court reopens investigation into the 1981 El Mozote massacre.

2006 - El Salvador implements US free trade agreement. Newly defined Honduran and Salvadoran border is inaugurated.

2007 - 21 inmates are killed in a prison riot. Three members of ARENA are killed in Guatemala by suspected mafia members.

2008 - Over 400 judges protest corruption allegations against four colleagues.

2009 - Former FMLN Marxist rebel Mauricio Funes elected president; he restores diplomatic relations with Cuba. Over 140 people killed and thousands displaced by mudslides and floods.

2010 - 14 people killed in San Salvador on one day by gangs.

2011 - El Salvador and Belize are listed as a major producers or transit routes for illegal drugs by the US. Salvadoran government apologizes for 1981 El Mozote massacre.

2012 - El Salvador found guilty over the civil war massacre at El Mozote by OAS Human Rights Court. Truce accorded between the two main gangs (“maras”), Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18.

2013 - Salvadoran government claims thousands of lives saved by year-long truce between gangs. US State Department issues travel warning due to “critically high” crime and violence.

2014 - Vice President and former left-wing rebel, Sanchez Ceren, becomes president. Francisco Flores, former president, is charged with misappropriating funds from Taiwan during his presidency. Flores claims the charges are politically motivated. US agrees to a \$277 million five-year aid package of economic assistance to El Salvador.



Torture Methods

MOCK EXECUTIONS have been used to terrorize and coerce confessions from detainees.

ELECTRIC SHOCK delivery to different parts of the body including feet, arms, rib cage and armpits has resulted in burns and scars.

BEATING with fists, ruffles, iron rods, and other instruments has been used to coerce false confessions. Victims report being hooded or tied to the ceiling and beaten for hours.

HANGING FROM EXTREMITIES while being beaten has been used to coerce confessions. "El avioncito" involves tying victims' hands behind their backs and suspending them in the air from the wrists causing dislocation of the shoulders.

IMMERSION IN WATER (el submarino) to simulate drowning to the point of suffocation has been used by interrogators. Prisoners have been blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs and placed from head to toe in a tank of water and forced to leap and gasp for air in order to breathe.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT has included rape, mutilation, and humiliation such as being forced to strip and do knee bends while interrogators pull hair or being forced to strip with over 20 pictures being taken.

HUMILIATION has included prisoners' heads being forced into latrines and forced nakedness with pictures taken.

SUFFOCATION has occurred when a hood (la capucha) or a plastic bag is placed over a prisoner's head. Victims also report having their heads tied with a hood or other materials during interrogations.

AMPUTATION of body including cutting off tongues has occurred in El Salvador.

KIDNAPPING of political and union activists and religious workers has occurred. Victims have been interrogated for days only to turn up in police headquarters where they were sent to jail without legal representation and often without formal charges. Additionally, kidnapping for profit has occurred.

WITNESSING TORTURE of others has been used to get confessions from victims and induce psychological trauma.

THREATS to one's family or oneself of being killed, shot, or beaten have been used to get information on FMLN leaders and guerilla groups. Reports have been documented of victims being forced to accept charges or risk death and beatings.

SENSORY TORTURE involves exposure to extreme temperatures, noise or loud music, shouting and the use of strange voices, bright lights, prolonged darkness, unpleasant smells, and force feeding spoiled food.

DEPRIVATION of food, water, sleep, medicine, and the ability to move freely in a cell in order to get prisoners or detainees to collaborate.

Current Situation

Languages Spoken: Spanish (official), Nahua and Maya (native languages)

Population: 6,125,512 (July 2014 est.)

Religion: Roman Catholic 57.1%, Protestant 21.2%, none 16.8%, other 2.3%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.9%, Mormon

Ethnic groups: Mestizo 90%, white 9%, Amerindian 1%

GANGS fuel El Salvador's murder rate, regularly the number two murder rate in the world for countries not at war. The deportation of US gang members starting in the 1980s fueled gangs' spread throughout Central America. In 2012, a truce between two main gangs, Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18, halved the murder rate in the country; but now, the murder rate is on the rise following the erroneous attribution of recent murders to the gangs, implying that they violated the truce. Safety concerns related to gang violence are a major impetus for the mass efflux of unaccompanied minors traveling to the US. Assault, disappearance, extortion, rape and murder are at higher rates now than during the civil war. Girls are targeted to be gang members' girlfriends and raped or killed if they refuse, while boys are beaten for refusing to join gangs.

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS are fleeing El Salvador at an unprecedented rate to the United States. This journey is fraught with extortion, kidnapping, muggings, theft, and rape. Between fiscal years 2009 and 2011, 4,525 unaccompanied alien children (UACs) entered the US and were placed in US custody, 3,314 in FY2012, 5,990 in FY2013, and 16,404 in FY2014. These unaccompanied children are leaving to reunite with family, to escape abusive family relationships, gang recruitment or gang violence, drug trafficking, enduring poverty, to find work to support family members who remain in Central America, and/or they were brought by human trafficking rings. During the Salvadoran civil war, many fled to the US, resulting in 2 million Salvadorans living in the US with ties to family back home. In addition, children between 9 and 11 years-old have been forced to work on plantations.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE is highly prevalent in El Salvador, which has the highest murder rate of women in the world, at ten women murdered per 100,000 population. Furthermore, there are reports of abuse of women by military personnel, including inappropriate vaginal and anal searches of women and girls visiting relatives in prison. Girls as young as 9 work long hours as domestics for extremely low wages; they are extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. The government has not actively investigated or prosecuted crimes against women and this has led to a situation of impunity for gender-based violence.

TOTAL BAN ON ABORTION has forced women and girls to receive unsafe abortions, to follow through with dangerous pregnancies or has resulted in lengthy prison sentences. Salvadoran women are denied reproductive rights, as abortion is illegal in all cases, including for survivors of rape and in scenarios in which the life of the woman or girl is at stake. Prison sentences of 2 to 8 years are given for women and girls found guilty of having an abortion. Those who have had natural miscarriages have been sentenced for up to 50 years under Salvadoran homicide laws.

IMPUNITY for human rights atrocities committed during the civil war was signed into law by the Salvadoran government in 1993, curtailing the prosecution of innumerable horrific crimes against humanity.