



MEXICO Report February 2021

Aim

The aim of this report is to present an overview of the most fundamental human rights issues that minorities groups in Mexico are facing every day. It starts with a general introduction of the country into question and then moves to analyse its major human rights concerns. It also presents some of the events that happened in the month of February and the first days of March. The organisation Global Human Rights Defence calls upon the national and international bodies for a prompt constructive change to address these issues.

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Mexico

Introduction¹

Mexico, officially known as the United Mexican States, is organised as a federation comprising 31 states and Mexico City — the capital and former Federal District — which is now an autonomous entity alongside the other states. The federal constitution relegates several powers to the states and Mexico City. At its most basic level, the local government is administered by municipalities.

History²

Pre-Columbian Mexico was already inhabited by many advanced civilizations: the Olmec, Maya, Toltec, Zapotec, and Mixtec.

In 1521, the Spanish Empire conquered and colonized the region, and heavily exploited the native populations. Mexico came under Spanish rule for three centuries before achieving independence in 1821. Its early history as a nation-state was marked by great political and socio-economic turmoil. In a war with the United States in the mid-19th century, Mexico lost nearly half of its territory. In the following period, new reforms were instituted and enshrined in the Constitution of 1857. This, in turn, triggered a civil war; at the end of which was introduced a reform on the property of the land, with the creation of ejidos, areas of communal land in which rural community members had usufruct rights. The following decades were marked by a dictatorship, which ended in 1910 after the outbreak of a chaotic revolution. This era saw Emiliano Zapata Salazar as a central figure, a peasant leader who took the cause of the landless Indians, who had greatly suffered at the hands of paramilitary groups.

In 1917, a new Constitution was signed, and the postrevolutionary era was marked by a relatively peaceful period, although indigenous people greatly struggled for their rights. In 1988, overtly fraudulent elections were held, and new neoliberal reforms were introduced, curtailing the power of the Mexican state to regulate business enterprises. In 1994, Mexico's economy was integrated with that of the United States of America and Canada with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),

1. Mexico Country Profile. (n.d.). One World Nations Online. Retrieved March 11, 2021, from <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/mexico.htm>; Mexico Country Profile. (2020, November 27). Index Mundi. <https://www.indexmundi.com/mexico/>;

2. Federal Research Division. (2008, July). Country Profile: Mexico. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles/Mexico-new.pdf>; Maiolo, S. (2014). A Brief History of Mexico: The Classic Period to the Present. <https://www.ptsd.k12.pa.us/Downloads/The%20History%20of%20Mexico%20Textbook%20PDF.pdf>

which lowered trade barriers.³ It is with the signing of this Agreement that Mexico suffered negative environmental impacts at the hands of foreign corporations.

Society⁴

Mexico is home to a vast array of cultures and peoples. In general, the mixture of Indigenous and European peoples has produced the largest segment of today's population — mestizos — who account for approximately 62% of the total population. Mexico is host to 68 indigenous communities, and about 21.5% of the population self-identifies as indigenous.⁵ Another substantial ethnic group is that of Afro-Mexicans, composed of descendants of the colonial-era slaves and recent immigrants.

3. North American Free Trade Agreement. (n.d.). International Trade Administration. Retrieved March 11, 2021, from <https://www.trade.gov/north-american-free-trade-agreement-nafta>
4. Mexico Country Profile. (n.d.). One World Nations Online. Retrieved March 11, 2021, from <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/mexico.htm>
5. del Val, J., Pérez Martínez, J. M., Sánchez García, C., & Avendaño Villafuerte, E. (2020, May 11). Indigenous World 2020: Mexico. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. <https://www.iwgia.org/en/mexico/3625-iw-2020-mexico.html>

Review of Human Rights' Situation

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on minority groups globally, including Mexico, causing disproportional distress on these most vulnerable groups and exacerbating those pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities. It is, therefore, threatening the efforts of previous years made towards tightening this gap and allowing for sustainable development and social justice.

The crisis affects these groups in several areas of their lives: from access to healthcare, food, water, and justice, to domestic violence and employment. Violence towards these minorities is not a new issue; nonetheless, the data shows a steady increase in verbal and physical abuse.⁶

Gender-based Violence and Women's Human Rights

Latin America is one of the most dangerous regions for women, and Mexico has one of the highest numbers of registered femicides.⁷ In 2021 alone, there have already been 20 femicides.⁸

Sexist violence in the country is a continuous struggle that has increased considerably during the pandemic.⁹ The overall situation of distress, the social and economic crisis, and the confinement at home have aggravated violence against women.¹⁰ In addition, the pandemic has impacted women disproportionately, causing many of them to lose their jobs, and posing a greater burden on them by forcing them to take on more responsibilities for their families and household chores. Indigenous and Afro-Mexican women are particularly vulnerable as they face multiple layers of discrimination and detriment.¹¹

The CDHCM (Human Rights Commission for Mexico City) registered higher numbers of digital violence, mainly in the form of cyberbullying, extortion, pornography, and hate speech.¹² Indeed, the pandemic spurred every sector and individuals to move their activities online, and the situation has only worsened since the outbreak.¹³

6. Migueles Ramírez, P. D., & Careaga Pérez, G. (2020, June). Observatorio Nacional de Crímenes de Odio contra personas LGBT en México. Observatorio Nacional de Crímenes de Odio contra personas LGBT. <http://www.fundacionarcoiris.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Informe-Observatorio-2020.pdf>; Olivares Alonso, E. (2021, March 8). Alza del 1.4% en casos de feminicidio durante año de pandemia: Idheas. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/03/08/sociedad/alza-del-1-4-en-casos-de-feminicidio-durante-ano-de-pandemia-idheas/>
7. Tinjacá, D. M. (2021, March 6). Latinoamérica sufre una "pandemia en la sombra" por la violencia machista. Clarín. https://www.clarin.com/agencias/efe-latinoamerica-sufre-pandemia-sombra-violencia-machista_0_3FVbd4Pjc.html
8. Ocampo Arista, S. (2021, March 9). Reporta Tlaxchinollan 20 feminicidios en la Montaña de Guerrero este año. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/03/09/estados/reporta-tlaxchinollan-20-casos-de-feminicidios-en-lo-que-va-del-ano/>
9. Gómez Mena, C. (2021, March 7). Derechos de las mujeres, los más afectados en la pandemia: analistas. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/03/07/sociedad/derechos-de-las-mujeres-los-mas-afectados-en-la-pandemia-analistas/>
10. Manrique De Lara, A., & De Jesús Medina Arellano, M. (2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic and Ethics in Mexico Through a Gender Lens. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 17(4), 613–617. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-020-10029-4>
11. Gómez Flores, L. (2021, February 22). Persiste la discriminación con los pueblos indígenas: Nashieli Ramírez. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/02/22/capital/persiste-la-discriminacion-con-los-pueblos-indigenas-nashieli-ramirez/>
12. Hernández, N. (2021, March 9). Derechos Humanos Cdmx presenta informe sobre violencia digital contra mujeres. Milenio. <https://www.milenio.com/politica/cdmx-cdhcm-presenta-informe-violencia-digital-mujeres/>
13. Gómez Flores, L. (2021, March 9). Al Covid-19 se suma la violencia de género en la web: Nashieli Ramírez. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/03/09/capital/al-covid-19-se-suma-la-violencia-de-genero-en-la-web-nashieli-ramirez/>
14. Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Ciudad de México. (2021, March). CDHCM Presenta Informe Violencia Digital Contra Las Mujeres En La Ciudad De México (Boletín de prensa 40/2021). <https://cdhcm.org.mx/2021/03/73893/>

Introduction



There are fewer and fewer Awá in Ñambí Piedra Verde, but those who have remained continue in their firm intention of protecting their territory. Source: Resguardo Ñambí Piedra Verde

The violation of the rights of indigenous communities has increased in 2020, and the pandemic has played a crucial role.¹⁵ The government restrictions have aided criminal organisations in controlling indigenous lands. Confinement measures to prevent the spread of the virus forced indigenous people to stay in their home, thus leaving their organisation and their fight to protect their lands. The courts were closed as well, and when they started operating again, they rejected the communities' demands for protection or judicial remedies that the Mayans were seeking to contain the degradation of their territory.

The key actors behind this long and ongoing struggle over natural resources and indigenous territories are the government, corporations, and criminal organisations.¹⁵

There is still too little response at the state and federal level to Indigenous concerns.¹⁶ Many of these needs preceded Covid-19, but the pandemic has exacerbated the issues. Even after 25 years from the signature of the San Andrés Accords — an agreement that granted autonomy, recognition, and rights to the indigenous population of Mexico — these indigenous communities keep living in a context of expropriation, militarization, and threats from the Mexican government.¹⁷

14. Vera, E. (2020, September 16). La violencia de la pandemia: líderes indígenas asesinados y amenazados en América Latina. Mongabay. <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/09/violencia-pandemia-lideres-indigenas-asesinados-latinoamerica/>

15. Congreso Nacional Indígena. (2021, February 24). Comunicado del CIPOG-EZ sobre las graves violaciones a los derechos humanos en la montaña baja de Guerrero. <https://www.congresonacionalindigena.org/2021/02/24/comunicado-del-cipog-ez-sobre-las-graves-violaciones-a-los-derechos-humanos-en-la-montana-baja-de-guerrero/>

16. Grabmeier, J. (2021, February 12). Grasshoppers & roadblocks: Coping with COVID-19 in rural Mexico. Ohio State News. <https://news.osu.edu/grasshoppers--roadblocks-coping-with-covid-19-in-rural-mexico>

17. Henríquez, E. (2021, February 17). A 25 años, siguen sin cumplirse los acuerdos de San Andrés: Frayba. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/02/17/estados/a-25-anos-siguen-sin-cumplirse-los-acuerdos-de-san-andres-frayba/>

Violence against Human Rights Defenders and Journalists



A memorial for murdered journalists Miroslava Breach, left, and Javier Valdez, who were killed in separate attacks in Mexico in 2017. Photograph: Rebecca Blackwell/AP

The year 2020 saw 677 attacks — only between January and June — against human rights defenders, many of which were indigenous people who were protecting their territories.¹⁸

Global Witness' documentation on the issue shows a growing trend of violence against human rights and environmental defenders each year. The reason behind these aggressions is the ever-increasing interest in the land and natural resources, and the corrupted relationship between large corporations and the government. These events are fostering climate change, allowing companies to do as they please, creating profits to the detriment of environmental protection. It is the defenders that report this corruption and who consequently often fall victim to violence.

This hostility falls not only on activists and defenders, but also on journalists and justice operators, who continue to be threatened; harassed; attacked; and killed, in an attempt to extinguish their demands for truth and justice. Journalists that have denounced corruption at the state level, drug trafficking, and organized crime have disappeared or are assassinated, kidnapped, and attacked. In the last decade, Mexico has become one of the most dangerous countries to practice journalism, despite the constitutional and legislative provisions in place to protect them.¹⁹

In addition, there is a lack of proper investigations being conducted by the authorities.²⁰ The situation has been brought numerous times to the attention of the United Nations, which has sent Special Rapporteurs in order to investigate these issues.²¹

18. Gómez Durán, T. (2020, July 29). Latinoamérica: región donde más defensores ambientales fueron asesinados en 2019. Mongabay. <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/07/latinoamerica-mas-defensores-ambientales-asesinados-global-witness-2019-informe/>

19. Lakhani, N. (2020, December 22). Mexico world's deadliest country for journalists, new report finds. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/22/mexico-journalists-deadly-cpr-press-freedom>

20. World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Mexico. (2021, January 13). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2021/country-chapters/377395>

21. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), End of mission statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst on his visit to Mexico from from 16 to 24 January 2017, 24 January 2017, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5889ef3f4.html>; Lawlor, M. Última advertencia: los defensores de los derechos humanos, víctimas de amenazas de muerte y asesinatos, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, forty-sixth session, UN Doc A/HRC/46/35 (24 December 2020). <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/46/35>;

Violence against Migrants

In Mexico, many migrants from Central America continue to suffer abuses at the hands of the police. Many individuals are the victims of targeted kidnapping, trafficking, rape, and killing by criminal gangs which often operate in collusion with local authorities.²² The rights afforded to migrants by legislation, such as the right to protection and access to justice, are still not implemented adequately. The criminal gangs and public officials responsible for these offences often go unpunished. Many asylum-seekers suffered violence and extorsions from police, migration officers, and criminal organizations.²³

Migration detention centres are overcrowded, and many children are held in immigration centres in violation of international standards. There are mass arbitrary arrests and detentions. Responses to claims are untimely and many were sent back to their countries of origin, thus violating the principle of non-refoulement. Many families that are looking for international protection from torture, political persecution, and arbitrary detention, still suffer such abuses in Mexican territory as well.

22. Amnesty International. (2014). Human Rights Challenges Facing Mexico. Amnesty International Publications. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/530705324.pdf>

23. México: Abusos contra solicitantes de asilo en la frontera con Estados Unidos. (2021, March 5). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2021/03/05/mexico-abusos-contra-solicitantes-de-asilo-en-la-frontera-con-estados-unidos>

Human Rights Violations against LGBTQ+ Community



Image: REUTERS/Jose Luis Gonzalez

It is important to recognise the positive steps and initiatives taken by the Mexican Government to combat discrimination and hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, such as adding to their Penal Code an aggravating circumstance when the crime is against LGBTQ+ individuals.²⁴ However, despite these measures, homophobia and transphobia remain prevalent in the country, and violence against this minority group persists, often leading to murder and disappearances. Another issue worsening the situation is the lack of effective justice, preventing the victims from receiving reparation, and thus favouring impunity.

The research shows that transgender women are the most vulnerable, representing 50% of all homicides within the LGBTQ+ community, while nearly a third were gay men. Mexico ranks as one of the most dangerous countries for LGBTQ+ people and has marked a new record in 2019, with at least 441 LGBTQ+ individuals being murdered since 2015. Mexico is especially dangerous for the transgender community, as it occupies the second place at the global level with most homicides against them.

Despite the efforts from the government in granting more rights and protections to this community — supported also by the national Supreme Court — LGBTQ+ individuals still face prejudice and discrimination, indicating a lack of effective implementation of these measures. The greater visibility afforded by advances in LGBTQ+ issues, fostered by the increased presence of organisations advocating for their rights, has led many intolerant groups to reject their causes, thus contributing to the surging violence.

24. Decreto No. 477, Por El Que Se Aprueba Reformar El Artículo 8, Y La Fracción I Del Artículo 114; Asimismo, Adicionar El Artículo 123 Bis Al Código Penal Para El Estado De Colima (2015). <http://www.ordenjuridico.gob.mx/Documentos/Estatal/Colima/wo101804.pdf>

Human Rights Violations (ICCPR)²⁵

- The failure to prevent and to appropriately investigate and prosecute killings of LGBT+ individuals because of their sexuality and/or gender identity constitutes a violation of Articles 2 (the right not to be discriminated against) in conjunction with Article 6 (the right to life).
- The failure to protect individuals from homophobic or transphobic violence constitutes a violation of Articles 2, Articles 7 (the right not to be subject to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment), Article 9 (the right to liberty and security of person)
- The prohibition of same-sex marriage, together with the discrimination in social security benefits and in conforming identity documents to one's gender identity violates Articles 2, Articles 23 (right to family life), and Article 26 (right to equality and non-discrimination in the administration of justice).

25. Letra S, Sida, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana, A.C., Center for International Human Rights of Northwestern University School of Law, & Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights, Global Initiative for Sexuality and Human Rights. (2014, June). Human Rights Violations Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) People in Mexico: A Shadow Report. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/MEX/INT_CCPR_ICJ_MEX_17477_E.pdf

Human Rights Events of 2021



Gender violence towards peaceful protesters

In recent years, women in Mexico have been taking to the streets to peacefully protest in an effort to improve their socio-economic situation and get better recognition of their rights. The holding of protests against gender violence has increased from 2015 to 2020, and, in the same period, the number of investigations for femicides has also grown: from 411 in 2015 to 860 in 2020, 128.4% more.³¹

Moreover, it is necessary to note that these figures have fundamental problems; only in 25.3% of murder cases was an investigation opened considering gender reasons.³² There is, in fact, an understatement of gender crimes, estimated to be more than 90% of what is actually reported.³³ This means that, of the 10 daily-registered femicides, there are actually around 20 happening. In addition to this, only 8.54% of women who turned to the police to investigate their gender-based violence cases felt listened to and satisfied with the support received.³⁴

What is of greater concern is that, during these demonstrations, women are faced with violence and abuses from the Mexican authorities.³⁵ Women report illegal use of force and sexual violence to silence their protests against gender-based violence.³⁶ It is reported that the authorities abuse women who have “dared to go out into the streets” to teach them a lesson and intimidate them from protesting again.³⁷

31. Badillo, D. (2021, March 6). Tres de cada cinco mujeres en México viven en situación de violencia. *El Economista*. <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Tres-de-cada-cinco-mujeres-en-Mexico-viven-en-situacion-de-violencia-20210306-0001.html>; Desk. (2021, March 9). “They raped me, they beat me and I felt like I was disappearing”: in Mexico women suffer human rights abuses when they go out to protest. *Inspired Traveler*. <https://www.inspiredtraveler.ca/they-raped-me-they-beat-me-and-i-felt-like-i-was-disappearing-in-mexico-women-suffer-human-rights-abuses-when-they-go-out-to-protest>;
32. Badillo, D. (2021, March 6). Tres de cada cinco mujeres en México viven en situación de violencia. *El Economista*. <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Tres-de-cada-cinco-mujeres-en-Mexico-viven-en-situacion-de-violencia-20210306-0001.html>
33. Badillo, D. (2021, March 6). Tres de cada cinco mujeres en México viven en situación de violencia. *El Economista*. <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Tres-de-cada-cinco-mujeres-en-Mexico-viven-en-situacion-de-violencia-20210306-0001.html>
34. Badillo, D. (2021, March 6). Tres de cada cinco mujeres en México viven en situación de violencia. *El Economista*. <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Tres-de-cada-cinco-mujeres-en-Mexico-viven-en-situacion-de-violencia-20210306-0001.html>
35. Mexican authorities used illegal force to silence feminist protesters. (2021, March 3). *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/03/mexico-autoridades-usaron-violencia-sexual-para-silenciar-mujeres/>
36. Desk. (2021, March 9). “They raped me, they beat me and I felt like I was disappearing”: in Mexico women suffer human rights abuses when they go out to protest. *Inspired Traveler*. <https://www.inspiredtraveler.ca/they-raped-me-they-beat-me-and-i-felt-like-i-was-disappearing-in-mexico-women-suffer-human-rights-abuses-when-they-go-out-to-protest>
37. Mexican authorities used illegal force to silence feminist protesters. (2021, March 3). *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/03/mexico-autoridades-usaron-violencia-sexual-para-silenciar-mujeres/>

During a march on International Women's Day, which saw millions of women gathered in a peaceful demonstration, the police responded with sexual abuse, rape; arbitrary detentions; and excessive use of force.³⁸ Police officers arrested several women without properly identifying themselves and acted in ways that made them fear they would disappear, such as by holding them isolated for long periods of time.

These practices of repression are violating women's rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. As Tania Reneaum Panszi, Executive Director of Amnesty International Mexico, informs, "The authorities at various levels of government have stigmatized women's protests, characterizing them as 'violent' with the aim of discrediting their activism and questioning their motives".³⁹

The acts of violence are a violation of these women's right to personal safety and infringe upon the prohibition of torture and other forms of inhumane treatment.⁴⁰ Moreover, all sexual abuse committed by a state authority must be considered a form of torture, in accordance with international human rights law, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) judgments relating to Mexico.⁴¹

38. Mexico: La Ira de Las Mujeres (Estigma Y Violencia Contra Mujeres Que Protestan). (2021). Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR4137242021SPANISH.PDF>

39. Mexican authorities used illegal force to silence feminist protesters. (2021, March 3). Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/03/mexico-autoridades-usaron-violencia-sexual-para-silenciar-mujeres/>

40. Varela, M. (2021, March 3). Amnistía Internacional denuncia la agresión policial en las manifestaciones feministas de México. El País. <https://elpais.com/mexico/2021-03-03/amnistia-internacional-denuncia-la-agresion-policia-en-las-manifestaciones-feministas-de-mexico.html>

41. Mexican authorities used illegal force to silence feminist protesters. (2021, March 3). Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/03/mexico-autoridades-usaron-violencia-sexual-para-silenciar-mujeres/>

Human Rights Defenders

The journalists and human rights defenders that mostly fall victims of violence while on their line of work usually fight for the most pressing social causes or belong to the most vulnerable groups.⁴² These are indigenous people, environmentalists, and defenders of the land, women, migrants and asylum-seekers defenders, LGBT+ rights defenders, and journalists who covered the covid-19 pandemic or any topic related to the above-mentioned issues. In addition, people continue to disappear in the context of the pandemic.

Attacks and arbitrary detentions against members of the CNI (National Indigenous Congress) are continuously reported. In the month of February, a group of members of the CNI (National Indigenous Congress) have been unjustly detained.⁴³ This violation of human rights is not an isolated event but is the consequence of an ongoing battle between indigenous communities and those who try to expropriate them of their territories.

In this context, it is important to mention the existence of a culture of fear.⁴⁴ Although there are no daily aggressions against defenders, there exists a sort of social discipline based on such fear, which mainly originates from the sporadic, but continuous, finding of corpses.⁴⁵

43. Ocampo Arista, S. (2021a, February 21). Retienen a ocho funcionarios por saqueo de bosques. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/02/21/estados/retienen-en-jaleaca-de-catalan-a-ocho-autoridades-federales/>

44. Vera, E. (2020, September 16). La violencia de la pandemia: líderes indígenas asesinados y amenazados en América Latina. Mongabay. <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/09/violencia-pandemia-lideres-indigenas-asesinados-latinoamerica/>

Indigenous People



Wake of two indigenous people of the Awá ethnic group, in Nariño (Colombia). Photo: Minga Association

Indigenous environmental leaders who oppose corporations' projects are subjected to acts of violence at the hand of individuals, and sometimes with the support of local security forces or State officials. Violence in this context resulted in homicides, extrajudicial executions, harassment, and life threats. In February, eight state officials were detained for having looted forests, and an indigenous lawyer was brutally murdered with a machete.⁴⁶

To fully understand the reasons behind the protests of indigenous communities, it is crucial to clarify one important issue: much of Mexican territory has been leased to foreign companies, and at least half of this leased territory is indigenous land. In the Yucatan peninsula, the tourism industry and large projects of wind and photovoltaic systems are the main threat to the indigenous people of the Mayan ethnic group (says Ángel Sulub, of the CNI).⁴⁷

The public policies at the governmental level favour the establishment of large foreign corporations at the expense of the local economy and population. It is precisely these policies that have promoted mega projects such as the Mayan Train, which is considered to be tremendously damaging to the communities.⁴⁸

The measures to prevent the spread of the corona virus forced this community to stay at home and to abandon their fight. The courts had also been closed, and when they started operating again, they rejected the Mayans' demands for protection or judicial remedies to contain the degradation of their territory. In the meantime, the Mayan Train and other projects have continued during the quarantine period.

During the pandemic, there has been an increase in threats, persecution, injuries, and murders precisely in the areas where these mega projects are located. The situation that has arisen has put the Mayan region in the spotlight and, therefore, drew the attention of Mexico's criminal systems. This increased attention has brought a series of undesired events, such as the execution of many Mayans, as well as the imprisonments of indigenous people who opposed to these projects in defence of their lands. The exceptional circumstances brought about by the pandemic, such as the lockdown measures, are generally being used to generate repression and social control of indigenous groups.⁴⁹

47. Vera, E. (2020, September 16). La violencia de la pandemia: líderes indígenas asesinados y amenazados en América Latina. Mongabay. <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/09/violencia-pandemia-lideres-indigenas-asesinados-latinoamerica/>

48. Xantomila, J. (2021, March 7). Las indígenas, en pie de lucha por sus derechos. La Jornada. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/03/07/politica/las-indigenas-en-pie-de-lucha-por-sus-derechos/>

49. Vera, E. (2020, September 16). La violencia de la pandemia: líderes indígenas asesinados y amenazados en América Latina. Mongabay. <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/09/violencia-pandemia-lideres-indigenas-asesinados-latinoamerica>

Covid-19 Vaccines and Minority Groups



Source: PAHO

It is essential to mention in these times of hardship the implications of inequality in relation to the accessibility to healthcare, including covivaccines. Migrants and indigenous people in Mexico are at risk of missing out on the coronavirus vaccine because the system currently requires an identification number that not everyone in the country has ('CURP').⁵⁰

This system threatens to exclude over one million Mexicans with no birth certificate, as well as thousands of undocumented migrants in the country. Under these circumstances, it is crucial that the government ensures that people's needs are put above its policies, without exceptions. This would ensure the safety of not only those lacking documents, but the country at large.

At a press conference in February, Gabriela del Carmen Nucamendi Cervantes, director of the epidemiology for non-transmittable diseases, addressed this concern. She ensured that, although a CURP is a necessary documentation to proceed with the vaccination, there exists the possibility to request a CURP that can be released to everyone on Mexican territory. In addition, even if the CURP, the address information, or identification document could not be found, it is possible to still approach the vaccination points where these individuals can be registered and eventually receive the vaccine.⁵¹

50. Murray, C. (2021, February 8). Mexico's vaccines plan raises fears migrants will miss out. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-mexico-vaccine-trf-idUSKBN2A829N>

51. Versión estenográfica. Conferencia de prensa. Informe diario sobre coronavirus COVID-19 en México. (2021, February 21). Gobierno de México. <https://www.gob.mx/salud/prensa/version-estenografica-conferencia-de-prensa-informe-diario-sobre-coronavirus-covid-19-en-mexico-264382>

Concluding Remarks

The reported issues are not a new phenomenon. The minority groups present in the country — women and young girls, indigenous peoples, LGBT+ individuals, migrants, journalists and activists — have been suffering human rights abuses for extremely long periods of time.

Although from a legislative perspective these minorities are generally afforded all the rights necessary to ensure their protection and safety; in practice, the episodes of violence disproportionately fall on these most vulnerable groups. This highlights a lack of effective enforcement of the protective measures in place.

This violence — which includes physical and sexual abuse, murder, and subsequent impunity of the offenders — should be condemned and remedied.

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