

El Salvador - Chronology

Background

Although El Salvador declared independence from Spain in 1821, the legacy of colonialism continued throughout the twentieth century. Near-absolute power merely shifted from the Spaniards to the Salvadorans of European ancestry. Mestizos and indigenous peoples—some 95 percent of the total population were virtually serfs. A tiny aristocracy—known as “The 14 Families”—ruled the nation through a military commanded by mercenaries selected and paid by the richest landowners and industrialists. From 1933 - 1980, all but one president was a military dictator. Their regimes staged fraudulent elections periodically, to maintain the external pretense of democracy, but their regimes were based on repression blended with occasional reforms intended to defuse potential revolutions.

This system began to unravel in the 1970s, when previously splintered opponents of military rule united behind Jose Napoleon Duarte, leader of the Christian Democratic Party. Duarte and his broad-based reform platform were defeated in one of the most fraudulent elections in recorded history. Subsequent protests were crushed, and Duarte was exiled. These events convinced many—peasants and middle class alike—that reforms could not be achieved democratically when democracy itself was corrupt, and revolutionary groups grew rapidly. In 1980-83 there was

“unparalleled institutionalization of violence” in the words of the Commission on the Truth. “The main characteristics of this period were that violence became systemic and terror and distrust reigned among the civilian population. The fragmentation of any opposition or dissident movement by means of arbitrary arrests, murders, and selective and indiscriminate disappearances of leaders became common practice. Repression in the cities targeted political organizations, priests and nuns, students, trade unions, and organized sectors of Salvadoran society, as exemplified by the persecution of organizations such as the Asociación

Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños, murders of political leaders, and attacks on human rights bodies...Organized terrorism, in the form of the so-called “death squads”, became the most aberrant manifestations of the escalation of violence. Civilian and military groups engaged in a systematic murder campaign with total impunity, while state institutions turned a blind eye...This period saw the greatest number of deaths and human rights violations.”

1979

- Oct. 15: The extreme right-wing government of Gen. Carlos Humberto Romero is overthrown by a coalition of moderate military officers and civilian leaders. The Revolutionary Government Junta (JRG), headed by Col. Jaime Abdul Gutiérrez and Col. Adolfo Majano, pledge to end repression and corruption; to protect human rights, and to distribute national wealth more equitably.
- Nov: The JRG announces free elections will be held in 1982; it restricts landholdings to 100 hectares per owner; nationalizes banks, and recognizes all political parties. The ORDEN death squad is dissolved and the Salvadoran National Security Agency (ANSESAL) is dismantled.

1980

- Jan 3: Facing death threats from the far right, all three civilian members of the Junta resign, as do 10 of the 11 cabinet ministers. The Revolutionary Government Junta is virtually paralyzed and unable to carry out many of its intended reforms.
- Jan: Anti-government violence erupts—occupations of radio stations, bombings of government-controlled newspapers (*La Prensa Gráfica* and *El Diario de Hoy*), abductions, executions, and attacks on military targets. It is still not clear how many attacks were carried out by extremist groups such as the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL) and the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) and how many are the work of mercenaries controlled by neo-fascists who hope to create justification for extreme repression.

- Jan: A wide array of left, center-left, and populist organizations including Bloque Popular Revolucionario (BPR), Ligas Populares 28 de Febrero (LP-28), Frente de Acción Popular Unificada (FAPU), and Unión Democrática Nacionalista (UDN) unite, forming the Coordinadora Revolucionaria de Masas (CRM). They stage protest marches, sit-ins at government offices, and labor strikes to reinforce their demands for the release of political prisoners and medical care for the poor.
- Jan 22: The National Guard attacks a massive CRM demonstration, described by Archbishop Romero as peaceful. They kill somewhere between 22 - 50 people and wound 600 - 800 others.
- Feb. 6: US Ambassador Frank Devine informs the State Department. that mutilated bodies are appearing on roadsides just as they had during the worst days of Gen. Romero's regime. He warns that the extreme right is arming itself and preparing for massive confrontations in which they clearly intend to ally with the military against both the government and the citizenry.
- Feb. 22: Mario Zamora, Chief State Counsel and leader of the Christian Democrats, is murdered at his home, only days after Roberto D'Aubuisson—a former National Guard officer and death-squad commandant—accuses Zamora of being a communist agitator.
- March 9: José Napoleón Duarte joins the Junta and leads the provisional government until the 1982 elections.
- March 9: The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) expels Rubén Zamora, Dada Hizeri, and other progressive leaders. This seeming capitulation to rightists contributes to the political polarization that is spawning unprecedented increases both in death squad activities and in the numbers of previously apolitical peasants who join guerilla groups.
- US Congressional committee debates continuing military aid to El Salvador, decides to continue funding, despite Archbishop Romero's plea for its termination.
- March 24: Archbishop Oscar A. Romero is assassinated. The crime further polarizes Salvadoran society and presages the all-out war that will soon come. It also convinces many peasants that the Church cannot save them and that their only hope is armed revolution.

- March 30: During the archbishop's funeral, bombs are hurled at the 50,000 - 60,000 mourners outside San Salvador Cathedral, and the panic-stricken mourners are strafed with gunfire. Forty-Two are killed and more than 200 are wounded.
- May 7: Major Roberto D'Aubuisson is arrested with a group of military and mercenary followers. Weapons and documents seized during the raid implicate the group in planning and financing Archbishop Romero's murder. The courts capitulate to waves of terrorist threats and institutional pressures from the far right and release D'Aubuisson. This strengthens the most conservative sectors of Salvadoran society and incontrovertibly reveals the passivity of the nation's judiciary.
- May 14-15: As many as 600 Salvadoran peasants are tortured and murdered by government forces near the Sumpul River.
- Aug 12-15: A general strike called by FDR (a coalition of center-left parties) is violently suppressed, leaving 129 labor organizers dead.
- Oct: The five largest revolutionary groups unite to form the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN).
- The Jesuit University of Central America is bombed twice, and Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria receives numerous death threats.
- Nov: Ronald Reagan is elected President of the United States; he announces that he will greatly increase US aid to the Salvadoran military.
- Nov. 27: Alvarez Córdoba and six FDR leaders are abducted, tortured, and murdered. Gen. Maximiliano Hernández Martínez of the Brigada Anticomunista issues a communiqué claiming "credit."
- Dec. 2: Four US churchwomen (Sr. Ita Ford, MM, Sr. Maura Clarke, MM, Sr. Dorothy Kazel, OSU, and laywoman Jean Donovan) are abducted, raped, and murdered by National Guard troops.
- Dec 13: José Napoleon Duarte becomes El Salvador's first civilian president in 49 years.

1981

- Jan 3: The President of the Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Reform and two advisors are murdered in the Sheraton Hotel after they refuse to denounce land reform as a "Marxist conspiracy." The murders are only

one element of a systematic terror campaign directed at both the administrators and the beneficiaries of agrarian reform.

- Jan 10: The FMLN launches coordinated guerilla attacks on military targets throughout the nation. Hundreds are killed on both sides.
- Jan 14: The US government restores military aid, which had briefly been suspended due to public outrage stemming from the murders of the churchwomen. Washington praises the Salvadoran government for its resistance to "...a textbook case of armed aggression by communist powers. Much of this aid is used to create the Rapid Deployment Infantry Battalions (BIRI, Atlacatl, Atonal, Beloso, etc.)—the very groups that the Commission on Truth would later identify as "...the primary agents of war crimes."
- March 17: Salvadoran military stages land and air-based attacks on thousands of displaced peasants trying to flee across the Lempa River to Honduras. 20 - 30 people are killed and another 189 are never located. An additional 147 refugees, including 44 children, are slaughtered October 20-29 at the same river. In November, in Cabañas Department, government troops attack more than 1,000 people trying to escape to Honduras. Christian Legal Aid reports that displaced peasants, whose existence embarrasses the government, have become the targets of choice for both the military and the death squads.
- Dec: Approximately 1,000 villagers are massacred by the Salvadoran Army in and around the village of El Mozote. Both the Salvadoran and US governments deny that the massacre occurred, but later admit their attempts to cover it up.
- Dec: Christian Legal Aid reports 12,501 confirmed fatalities during 1981. The organization cannot even estimate how many thousands of deaths were not reported or could not be proven.

1982

- President Reagan certifies that El Salvador is complying with human rights conditions for receiving US aid.
- Jan. 31: Combined land-air military operations kill 152 civilians in Nueva Trinidad and Chalatenango.

- Feb: FMLN attacks the Ilopango Air Force Base, destroying 6 of the Air Force's 14 UH-1H helicopters, 5 Ouragan aircraft, and 3 C-47s.
- Feb-April: FMLN carries out 439 acts of sabotage against economic targets, causing infrastructure damage totalling \$98 million.
- March 10: Some 5,000 peasants are fired upon by military helicopters as they fled from war-torn San Esteban Catarina.
- March 10: The Alianza Anticomunists de El Salvador publishes a hit list of 34 people who are "discrediting the armed forces." Most of the 34 are either journalists or clergy.
- March 17: Four Dutch journalists are killed.
- March 28: A new assembly is elected and the assembly chooses Alvaro Magana as president.
- May: Military troops kill hundreds of civilians, burn houses, and destroy crops of peasant farmers in the province of Chalatenango.
- May 24: The bodies of more than 150 men, women, and children are dumped at Puerta del Diablo, a clandestine site favored by the death squads.
- May 27: The bodies of six members of the Christian Democratic Party are found at El Playón, another clandestine mass grave used by the death squads.
- August: A military campaign of "pacification" in San Vicente kills 300 - 400 peasants.
- Aug 31: CONADES reports there are 226,744 internally displaced persons wandering the roads of El Salvador and an additional 175,000 - 295,000 displaced persons living in exile in other countries.
- President Duarte strenuously denounces the rightists, holding them responsible for the murders of hundreds of Christian Democrats.
- Christian Legal Aid reports 3,059 political murders during the first eight months of 1982, saying, "nearly all of them the result of action by government agents against civilians not involved in military combat."
- The Truth Commission estimates 5,962 civilians die at the hands at government forces. Once again, these are only the deaths that could be conclusively confirmed.

1983

- President Reagan appeals to Congress for increased military aid to El Salvador.
- Jan 15-18: FMLN guerillas temporarily occupy towns in Morazán. In a large-scale action, FMLN occupies Berlin, a city of 35,000, for three days, destroying the police and National Guard headquarters. The government responds with a large-scale counter-offensive. Monsignor Rivera y Damas reports that the rebels attack the military and the military attacks civilians.
- Feb 22: Uniformed soldiers kidnap, torture, and kill approximately 70 peasants from a cooperative at Las Hojas, Sonsonate.
- March 16: Marianela García Villas, President of the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador a non-governmental organization is executed by security forces.
- May 4: The Constituent Assembly passes an Amnesty Law for civilians involved in political offenses.
- May 25: Col. Albert Schaufelberger is shot by rebels, becoming the first US military adviser to die in the war.
- Aug 29-30: Negotiations begin between the government and the FDR-FMLN in San Jose, Costa Rica; no progress is made but both sides meet again in Bogotá on September 29.
- Sept 25-26: The FMLN attacks army positions in Tenancingo; the military responds with aerial bombings that kill 100 civilians.
- Oct. 7: Victor Manuel Quintanilla, senior FDR representative, is murdered along with three other persons. The Brigada Anticomunista claims responsibility.
- Oct 7: President Magaña announces the next round of peace talks have been cancelled.
- Nov 1: Gen. Maximiliano Hernández Martínez of the Brigada Anticomunista issues death threats to Bishops Rivera y Damas and Rosas Chavez, warning them to "...desist immediately from their disruptive sermons."
- Nov: Death squad activities increase sharply in October and November, as they had in May, in an effort to disrupt the continuing, albeit limited, dialogue between the government and the guerillas. Most of those

murdered by death squads were leaders of the political opposition or were trade unionists, educators, journalists, or clergy.

- Dec 9: Vice President George Bush visits San Salvador and warns that death squads must disappear because they threaten the viability of the government. He also demands the removal of certain military personnel and security officers who are guilty of human rights violations. There was a significant, albeit temporary decrease in activities of the squads.
- Dec 15: A new constitution is approved, after 20 months of debate. It strengthens individual rights, establishes safeguards against excessive detention and unreasonable searches, a pluralistic republican form of government, strengthens the legislative branch, and enhances judicial autonomy. It also codifies the rights of laborers, especially agricultural workers. It is a very impressive document on paper, but there are no provisions to enforce it.
- FMLN begins using land mines on a large scale, causing many civilian deaths. Hostage taking and murders of mayors and government officials become frequent. The guerillas' self-stated purpose is to demonstrate a "duality of power" in El Salvador.
- The government continues its policy of aerial bombing, artillery attack, and massive infantry campaigns against civilian populations in an effort to deprive guerillas of all means of survival causes increasing numbers of civilian casualties and displaced persons.
- The United Nations reports that 400,000 Salvadorans are displaced and homeless and an additional 700,000 are in exile abroad. Collectively, they represent 20 percent of the nation's total population.
- Dec 25: Monsignor Gregorio Rosas Chávez reports that 6,096 Salvadorans have been confirmed dead due to political violence. Approximately 4,700 were killed by the military and 1,300 were military or security forces.
- The year-end report of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights states: "...the number of civilians murdered for political reasons in El Salvador continues to be very high."

1984

- May 6: José Napoleón Duarte, a Christian Democrat defeats the neo-fascist Roberto d'Aubuisson in a runoff for the presidency. When Duarte takes office on June 1 he becomes the first civilian elected to the presidency in 50 years.
- April: Legal Protection reports that death squad activities decreased markedly during the first months of the year, and increased significantly in April.
- May 23: Five Salvadoran National Guardsmen are convicted of the murders of the US Churchwomen and are sentenced to 30 years in prison.
- Sept: The UN Commission on Human Rights reports that political murders have declined significantly, but says: "...the persistence of civilian deaths in or as a result of combat weakens the favorable impression created by the decline in the number of political murders in non-combat situations."
- October: President Duarte invites the FMLN to talks at La Palma Chalatenango on October 15 and at Ayagualo, La Libertad, on November 30. The meetings fail to make substantial progress due to sharp differences about incorporation of FMLN into the political structure, but each side credits the other with negotiating in good faith.

1985

- Negotiations between the government and the FMLN continue but produce no significant results.
- March 31: Christian Democrats defeated rightist ARENA candidates in a majority of the Legislative Assembly races and municipal elections.
- June 19: A Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos (PRTC) attack on a restaurant in San Salvador kills 4 US Marines and nine Salvadoran civilians.
- Sept: After the army captures PRTC Commander, Nidia Diaz, the FMLN abducts President Duarte's daughter, Inés Guadalupe Duarte. Fr. Ellacuria and Archbishop Rivera Damas negotiate a settlement that exchanges Ms Duarte and 22 mayors for Nidia Díaz and 21 other rebel leaders.

- Fascist death squad activity continues, but seems to be directed at government and rebel leaders almost equally. Legal Protection documents 136 murders by death squads in 1985.
- FMLN continues to use land mines. Legal Protection reports 31 deaths; the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (governmental) reports 46 killed and 100 injured by mines in 1985.
- For the first time in the 1980s, the military does not commit any large-scale massacres. However, intensive aerial bombings kill and displace many innocent bystanders.
- Christian Legal Aid attributes 1,655 civilian non-combatant deaths to government forces.

1986

- Jan: The Salvadoran military begins “Operation Phoenix” in an effort to regain the Guazapa area from FMLN control. The year-long military operation fails to drive out the guerilla forces, but it displaces huge numbers of rural people driving them from their homes.
- Displaced people form the Coordinadora Nacional de la Repoblación (CNR) that seeks to establish the right of civilians to live in the areas from which they came. The resettlement movement is supported by the Church.
- Political dialogue between the government and the FMLN remains deadlocked despite repeated efforts by the international community and the Church. President Duarte proposes peace plans on three occasions, but the FMLN rejects key provisions in each.
- Violence continues to decrease, relative to earlier years, but Operation Phoenix and repressive measures of state security forces produce casualties, as do abductions, summary executions, attacks on mayor’s offices, and mines laid by the FMLN.
- The civil war continues to depress both agricultural and industrial production, and the process of economic recovery is slow. Duarte adopts programs of economic stabilization and rejuvenation, but the economic crisis deepens and begins to threaten Duarte’s presidency.
- As the power increases in the rightist ARENA Party, it tries to strip Fr. Ellacuria of his citizenship and drive him from the country.

1987

- Labor, student, and *campesino* groups organize numerous demonstrations demanding negotiations to settle the civil war. However, dialogue between the parties remained at a standstill and, in the words of the UN Truth Commission “...it became clear that human rights violations were being fostered by institutional shortcomings, complicity, or negligence, and they were the main obstacles to the peace process.”
- Progress is made in what the international community termed “the humanization of the conflict, but there was a resurgence of violence against the labor movement, human rights groups, social organizations, and religious organizations. At the same time, the FMLN continued its campaign of abductions and murders of civilians affiliated with the government or the armed forces.
- August: Five Central American presidents meet in Guatemala and sign the Esquipulas II Agreement, calling for establishment of national reconciliation commissions in each country, an International Verification Commission, and amnesty legislation.
- The Papal Nuncio offers to host meetings between the government and the FMLN-FDR, Archbishop Rivera y Damas serve as moderators.
- The government and the FMLN-FDR endorse the Esquipulas II Agreement and announce establishing commissions to negotiate a cease-fire and other crucial points.
- The Legislative Assembly passes an “Amnesty Act Aimed at Achieving National Reconciliation.” The United Nations Commission on Human Rights Special Representative for El Salvador and human rights groups such as Americas Watch sharply criticize the scope of the amnesty, which extends to even the worst war criminals. Christian Legal Aid files lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the article that extends amnesty to every offense.
- Herbert Anaya Sanabria, coordinator of the Human Rights Commission (non-governmental) is murdered by a death squad. The incident causes enormous outrage.

- The United Nations Special Representative, José Antonio Pastor Ridruejo reports more humanitarian conduct by the armed forces than in any previous year. There have been no reports of mass murders or torture by the Salvadoran Armed Forces. He concludes that, for the first time, the guerillas are responsible for the majority of civilian deaths, primarily because of land mines. He also cites forcible recruitment of minors by guerilla forces.
- Overall, however, there is a significant decline in civilian casualties compared to 1986.
- Gen. Adolfo Blandón, Chief of the Armed Forces Joint Staff, reports at year's end that 470 military personnel had been killed and 2,815 wounded; rebel casualties totaled 1,004 dead, 670 wounded, and 847 taken prisoner.

1988

- ARENA wins a majority in the elections for the National Assembly, after FMLN urges its supporters to boycott the election. Although the economic crisis was probably the major reason for the Christian Democrat's loss, ARENA politicians claim the voters have mandated a return to far-right policies.
- The army resumes mass executions in San Sebastián and elsewhere.
- Death squads become more active again, killing an average of eight people per month—three times higher than in 1987.
- The Supreme Court exonerates the perpetrators of the Las Hojas Massacre, as well as those accused of the murders of the Director of ISTA and his American advisers.
- FMLN rebels kill eight mayors and threaten the lives of a similar number of suspected military informers.

1989

- The Truth Commission's reports "Two contradictory trends characterized Salvadoran society in 1989. On the one hand, acts of violence became more common, as did complaints of human rights violations, while on the

other, talks between representatives of the Government of El Salvador and members of the FMLN leadership went forward with a view to achieving a negotiated and political settlement of the conflict.”

- Alfredo Cristiani, a right-wing extremist, is elected president.
- April: Attorney General Roberto Garcia Alvarado is assassinated. Salvadoran military officers claim the assassination was plotted by the Jesuits at Central American University.
- June: Jose Antonio Rodriguez Porth, the President’s Chief of Staff, is assassinated.
- The government begins systematic intimidation and harassment of pastoral workers and social workers churches and religious organizations.
- Sept-Oct: the government and the FMLN continue peace talks in Mexico City, San Jose, Costa Rica, and in Caracas, Venezuela.
- President Cristiani asks Fr. Ellacuria to join a committee investigating a National Trade Union Federation bombing that killed 10 and wounded 35.
- Nov. 13: The Jesuit residences at the University of Central America are ransacked by the army’s Atlactl battalion.
- Nov. 15: Senior Salvadoran military officers give orders to kill Fr. Ellacuria and all witnesses.
- Nov. 16: Army troops drag six Jesuit priests (Ignacio Ellacuria, Rector of the University of Central America; Segundo Montes, Ignacio Martin-Baró, Armando López, Juan Ramón Moreno, and Joaquín López), their housekeeper, Elba Ramos, and the housekeeper’s daughter, Celina Ramos from their beds and shoot them to death at the Jesuit residence of the UCA.
- Nov: US government evacuates all nonessential diplomatic personnel.
- Government security forces bomb FENESTRAS headquarters.
- Nov 11: The FMLN retaliates for the bombing with the largest offensive of the war, attacking military centers in major cities throughout the nation. Fighting continues until December 12, claiming 2,000 lives on both sides and causing approximately 6 billion colones in property damage.
- The government responds to the FMLN with indiscriminate aerial bombardment of urban areas, and tortures and murders noncombatant civilians. These tactics swing public opinion sharply towards the FMLN.

1990

- Feb 23: Former President José Napoleón Duarte dies. The FMLN proclaims a unilateral cease-fire on February 24 and 25.
- Feb: US Congressman Joe Moakley, (D., MA), and his Special Task Force on El Salvador conduct an on-site investigation of the murders at the University of Central America. His report accuses the Armed Forces of impeding the investigation.
- The US House of Representatives cuts aid to El Salvador by 50 percent.
- The ferocious battles of November and December 1989 convince both sides that a decisive military victory is nearly impossible, and agree to resume negotiations to end the civil war through political means.
- Following a request from the Central American presidents, the UN begins to mediate talks between the two sides and intervenes at crucial moments to keep the parties from leaving the negotiating table.
- April: the government and the FMLN sign the Geneva Agreement, irreversibly committing themselves to an agenda and timetable for peace.
- May 21: Both sides agree to the Caracas Agenda to end the conflict.
- July 26: The San Jose Agreement on Human Rights is signed, and two final meetings are scheduled for 1991.
- August: Peace talks regarding the military deadlock, leads the Secretary General of the UN to demand that future talks be conducted on secret to avoid political grandstanding.
- Col. Ponce is named El Salvador's Minister of Defense despite accusations of his involvement in the murder of the Jesuits.
- November: FMLN steps up its military operation to move stalled negotiations. The international community appeals to the FMLN to desist, and it does.
- Dec: A US Army major implicates Col. Benavides of the Salvadoran Army in the murders at the University of Central America. Benevides is arrested.
- Dec: The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reports that 53 people were executed by death squads and 42 by the Army. FMLN executed 21 persons, of whom 14 were considered political murders. Nevertheless, there were fewer civilian deaths in 1990 than in 1989. The

numbers dropped sharply after the San Jose Agreement on Human Rights was signed.

- The army's operations killed 852 persons, but it is not known how many were FMLN combatants or how many were civilians.
- Dec: The Special Representative of the UN expresses the concerns of the Commission on Human Rights about the "alarming frequency" of murders, rapes, robberies, and abuse of authority committed by members of civil defense units, keeping the public in a constant state of fear.

1991

- Jan. 2: FMLN forces shoot down a helicopter manned by three American military advisors near San Miguel and execute the two survivors.
- Jan. 3-6: Negotiations in Mexico yield no concrete results.
- Jan. 21: Army troops execute all 15 members of a family in El Zapote.
- March: FMLN announces it will no longer boycott elections.
- April 4-27: Government and FMLN negotiators meet in Mexico City for their 8th round of discussions. They agree to establish the Commission on the Truth, and reach significant agreements regarding constitutional reform of the armed forces, the judiciary, and the electoral system.
- Congressman Moakley announces that the Jesuits' murder was planned at a secret meeting of senior Salvadoran military officers including Gen. Bustillo and Cols. Ponce, Zepeda, and Fuentes.
- Col. Benavides and Lt. Mendoza are convicted of the murders at the University of Central America.
- July 26: The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador is launched and its Human Rights Division becomes operational.
- Sept. 25: At the invitation of the Secretary-General of the UN, representatives of the Salvadoran government and the FMLN meet in New York City to sign an accord that establishes the National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace composed of representatives of the government, the FMLN, and other political parties, with observers from the Catholic Church and the UN. The New York City Accord also defines procedures for reforming and downsizing the army.

- Dec. 31: The government and the FMLN initialed a peace agreement under the auspices of UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar.

1992

- Jan.16: The final peace treaty—the Accords of Chapultepec—are signed in Mexico City, ending 12 years of tragic war that nearly destroyed El Salvador.
- Feb. 1: A 9-month ceasefire takes effect and is not broken.
- Aug: Jose Maria Tojiera, the Provincial of Central America, petitions the Salvadoran National Assembly to pardon Col. Benavides and Lt. Mendoza for the murder of the Jesuits.
- Nov: the U.N. Truth Commission begins investigating acts of violence committed during El Salvador’s civil war, and subsequently publishes its reports.
- A ceremony marks the official end of the conflict, concurrent with the demobilization of the FMLN military structure and the FMLN’s inception as a political party.

Subsequent Development

- March 20, 1993: Blanket amnesty is granted to all accused of atrocities during the civil war.
- March, 1994: El Salvador holds its first national elections that include candidates of the FMLN and other opposition parties. The United Nations oversee the election process. The Arena Party wins the presidency after a run-off and wins a majority in the National Assembly. The FMLN emerges as a major political force.
- March, 1996: The FMLN wins 45 percent of National Assembly seats and mayorships of many key cities, including San Salvador.
- 1999-2000: William Ford, brother of one of the churchwomen murdered in El Salvador in 1980, files a civil suit against Gens. Garcia and Casanova, who have been implicated in their murders, after both are granted permanent residence in the US. The jury finds both defendants “not necessarily responsible.”

- 2000: The Salvadoran Attorney General begins investigations of former President Cristiani, Gen. Ponce, and Gen. Bustillo in the murders of the Jesuits at UCA.