

Religious Intolerance as Human Insecurity: Voices of Indigenous Protestant IDPs from Chiapas, Mexico

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I. Introduction

Mexico's rich diversity is reflected in its nature, cuisine, genetics (Bole, K., 2021), and culture. Mexicans are among the happiest and most friendly people globally (InterNations, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2014). Nevertheless, since the Spanish colonization, religious intolerance, predominantly from Catholics towards Protestants, has violated human security's *right to live in freedom and dignity, free from fear and want* (CHS, 2003). This research will analyze how the hostilities towards Protestants are rooted in the history of Mexico, the state-Catholic Church relations, and the construction of the Mexican identity.

Religious intolerance in Mexico is widely recognized (NRC, 2015). It has received attention from academics (Heaton, T., 2012) who, despite recognizing the problem, fail to acknowledge its severity – to religious groups (VDLM) that focus mainly on the spiritual element. The worst cases of religious intolerance have happened in Chiapas, the most religiously diverse Mexican state. One of the first and remarkable cases is the story of the indigenous Chamula, Miguel Caxlan, a prominent Protestant pastor in Los Altos, Chiapas. Martinez Garcia (2008) shares the details of Miguel Caxlan's martyrdom which started with attempted murder in 1966 until his ultimate torture and killing in 1981.

This essay will take a human security approach to tell how the challenges from a world with multiethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural perspectives are an opportunity to develop strategies that protect and empower all humankind

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to live a life with *dignity* and freedom.

The number of religious Internal Displaced People (IDPs) in Chiapas rose to 45,000 people; still, religious intolerance is predominantly considered a secondary aspect, emphasizing that violence primarily happens due to political and economic motivations. Nevertheless, this paper argues that the intensity and gravity of violent cases in Los Altos have *religion* as a strong and often primary motivator.

There is a constant marginalization of the indigenous viewpoint while researching them, yet their voices provide a unique perspective for humanity. Thus, the author's testimonies among indigenous people from Los Altos, Chiapas, form the basis of this research.

II. Method and setting

This research discusses human security theories and uses a *decolonized methodology* from the indigenous Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021). Smith points to the need to set aside the 'Western' view, as indigenous people understand time and space differently. The data presented in this research flows from structured and semi-structured *interviews* (Yhang & Wildemuth, 2009) with diverse *local actors* with more than two decades of experience working with indigenous people and religious intolerance: a local journalist, the coordinator of a Catholic founded CSO focused on peacebuilding; two Catholic priests (including a Vicar of Peace and Justice); and four Protestant religious freedom advocates (three of them Protestant pastors). The purpose was to collect the various perspectives on the matter of religious intolerance in Chiapas. Yet, as mentioned, this research mainly focuses on the *testimonies* (Smith, 2012, p. 144) of 11 groups (approximately 55 people) of indigenous people victims of religious intolerance in Chiapas. The majority of interviewed people are living as IDPs after being expelled from their communities. Some others remained living in their ancestral lands, albeit under threat. For the protection of the participants, names were altered or remained anonymous when sharing quotes of their testimonies. The research also relies on extensive consultation of

bibliographic sources and audiovisual documentary materials collected during fieldwork.

III. Protestants and Indigenous People

Christianity is the largest religion worldwide, and Protestantism is the second largest form of Christianity (Bada, 2018). The general term *Protestant* refers to any follower of Christian churches other than the Roman Catholic Church in agreement with the Reformation principles that happened in the fifth century.

There are some main characteristics and differences between mainline Protestants and Evangelicals. The term *Evangelical* comes from the Greek word *evangel* used in the New Testament, referring to the good news that Jesus came to save humanity. Evangelicals have three main characteristics: 1) they believe they have been born again or have had a born-again experience; 2) They give a supreme authority to the Bible, considering it the actual word of God with no error; and, 3) Evangelicals make more religious proselytism compared with mainline Protestants, encouraging other people to believe in Jesus Christ (Green, 2017).

The Christian Indigenous in this case study falls under the Evangelical classification, and they also have identified themselves as such. Nevertheless, this research uses the term *Protestants* based on its historical definition since it is an easy to comprehend term and avoids doctrinal arguments.

For this article, the expression "indigenous people" follow Jose R. Martinez Cobo's definition (1986): *Indigenous people* have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies. They are non-dominant sectors of society, considering themselves distinct from other sectors of society. They are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit their ancestral territories and ethnic identity to future generations.

IV. Religious intolerance as human insecurity

The initial definition of Human Security came from the 1994 Human

Development Report, stating, "Human Security... has two main aspects. It means first safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression. Secondly, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life". Human Security has taken various approaches: narrow, broad, critical, and postcolonial. The *narrow* approach for Human Security establishes that the state is the best actor to guarantee the rule of law. Still, it also recognizes that organizations such as NGOs, media, and non-state actors can provide a comprehensive and more accurate perspective on global issues that require immediate attention (ICSS, 2001, p. 25). Protecting people from violent and physical threats seems to be the main focus of attention (HSR, 2009). The *broad* approach adds concern to non-physical elements that tend to be marginalized in public policies, such as individuals' identity and culture. The broad approach proposes understanding the fragilities and limitations of Human Security in a universe where various actors converge with different power ranges; the use of violence is not encouraged (Roberts, 2011, p. 87).

The *critical* approach argues that Human Security has *failed* because it became another means to reproduce power and preserve the *status quo* (Grayson, 2008). Giorgio Shani (2017) proposes that instead of disregarding Human Security, refine it using a post-secular and *postcolonial* approach. He argues that human security presupposes *ontological security* (Giddens, 1986), which refers to the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time to realize a sense of agency. Individuals need to feel secure in who they are, as identities or selves (Mitzen, 2006) to enjoy life *in freedom and dignity, free from fear and want*.

This research defines *religious intolerance* as a combination of *prejudicial intolerance*: closed-mindedness and antipathy toward a group of people with specific religious beliefs. That often comes with *deliberative intolerance*, "which involves interfering with specific beliefs or practices that are considered to violate moral principles and values" (Verkuyten and Yogeeswaran, 2020). For this research, intolerance happens when the religious majority harasses and intimidates the religious minorities for their beliefs, and changes of practices are

often perceived as a violation of the community's sacred principles (CSO coordinator, personal communication, 2017). Religious intolerance is a source of human insecurity when the state agents or community dictates how people should believe and worship. If Indigenous Protestants cannot make their own choices, they cannot live "free from fear and want."

V. Historical background.

1. Spanish colonization and early Mexican republic.

On August 13, 1521, *La Gran Tenochtitlan*, the capital city of the Aztec empire, fell under the dominion of the Spaniards, and *La Nueva España* was born. As the conquistador Hernan Cortes was a military and religious man, he was also accompanied by Catholic clergy (Ricard, 1986). In 1524 the first Catholic mission with twelve Franciscan monks came to *La Nueva España*. They used the Bula *Unam Sanctam*'s evangelization method from Pope Boniface VIII (1302). It states that one could only get salvation by being baptized in the Catholic Church and submitting to the Roman Pontiff. The missionaries felt their duty was to baptize indigenous people to save them, regardless (Ricard, 2017). Baptisms happened massively, primarily by force.

The religious orders also had the challenging mission to 'educate' the natives in an environment full of tensions. Tensions surface confronting an unknown culture. Among the regular clergy due to differences of opinion regarding the priorities of their mission. These diverse views were perhaps best expressed in 1550, in the Valladolid debate, between the priests, Las Casas, and Sepulveda, about whether to give the status of 'human' to indigenous peoples. Las Casas was an evangelistic defender of indigenous peoples. He advocated for individual freedom as a God-given right while emphasizing the king's duty to protect the indigenous peoples from the abuses of the Spaniards (Maestre, 2004). Las Casas won the debate and is remembered with honor in all of Mexico. The closest city in Chiapas where this case study focuses bears his name.

There were also differences among the Catholic clergy in their political agenda. The *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Santiago Tlatelolco* opened in 1536,

exemplifies it. The purpose was to offer a space for indigenous children to receive education in liberal arts, theology, religion, medicine, and painting. The *Colegio* also had an outstanding library, considered the first academic library of the Americas. In 1584 the *Colegio* closed under the authoritative argument that the type of education indigenous people received would transform them into 'dangerous beings' (Mathes, 1982). For Quijano, "The colonizers... imposed a mystified image of their patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach to the dominated. Later they taught them in a partial and selective way, to co-opt some of the dominated into their power institutions" (2010, p. 23).

Some religious orders, such as the Franciscans, considered it crucial to evangelize through the Bible; hence, they invested significant efforts in learning indigenous languages and translating some books of the Bible for them. However, by 1572 the Inquisition made all evangelizing and literacy mission progress suffer significantly with the prohibition and confiscation of all the materials translated into indigenous languages (de León Azcarate, 2015). The Church's mission was under the political and economic interests of the colonizers rather than the spiritual.

2. The state-endorsed religious intolerance.

By 1571, with Spain joining the Counter Reform mission, any other religion besides Catholicism was forbidden in their colonies. The first registered cases of religious intolerance in *La Nueva España* were towards Jews (Soberanes F., 1998, p. 286). They had presumably converted to Catholicism. Nevertheless, many still secretly kept their Jewish faith and were known as *criptojudíos*, and once discovered, they were condemned to be burned at the stakes. One of the most documented cases was the family Carvajal. The father 'el viejo' Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva was a *New Christian* (Jew converted to Christianity), a prominent Portuguese. He was made governor of Monterrey and could distribute land among 100 immigrants without proving their 'blood purity,' referring to their Christian ancestry. When some of his family members were discovered as

criptojudíos, he faced charges due to non-compliance with religious regulations (BBC Mundo, 2017).

Other antireligious efforts of the Inquisition from 1546 were towards *Lutherans*, a term in which all Protestants denominations were included. Special surveillance was put on non-Spaniard foreigners in *La Nueva España* who were mainly exiled when found guilty of Lutheranism (Bastian, 1990). The punishment towards Catholic clergy, *criollos* (Spaniards born in the New World), and *peninsulares* (Spaniards born in Spain) was more severe, as many were sentenced to public torture to send a message to the people. Inquisitor of Murcia, Pedro Moya de Contreras, urged people to make official allegations against Protestants for being "rabid wolves and dogs infesting the souls of the Lord's Vine" (Greenleaf, 1981, as cited in Bastian, 1990, p. 73). In this way, the pedagogic strategy to educate hate towards the Protestant "heresy" sunk in the Mexican imaginary (Bastian, 1990, p. 71).

La Nueva España strictly observed the confiscation of the books listed in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Greenleaf, 1981, as cited in Bastian, 1990). Every ship needed to have a Catholic priest "inquire into the orthodoxy of the individual, in the same way as nowadays is inquired his health and race" (Freyre G., 1949, p. 20). This policy prevented the cultivation of thought that was already fueling revolutions in Enlightened Europe. Indeed, the work of Rousseau, Montesquieu, Locke, La Bruyere, and Fenelon were among the list of forbidden books in the Spanish colonies. Nevertheless, the need for expert hands to exploit the mines forced Spain to relax its measures towards people from overseas, including Protestant-dominated nations. Foreign technicians were granted a legal stay in the Colonies without being bothered for "reasons of conscience" (Bastian, 1990, p. 82).

3. Mexican independence

Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and Jose Maria Morelos were among the Founding Fathers of Mexico. They were part of the regular clergy that in 1810 led the movement of independence. Hidalgo and Morelos are considered

national heroes and celebrated by the Catholic Church as one of their own. Yet, it is often denied that they were excommunicated and executed after being tortured by the order expedited by archbishop Francisco Javier de Lizana y Beaumont in 1811 (arquidiocesismexico.org.mx). It states the excommunication bull that Hidalgo and Morelos were accused of being "Lutherans, Calvinists and Judaizers atheists." This event received peculiar attention in 2007 when the Chamber of Deputies special commission to celebrate the 200 years of Mexican Independence supported the request initiated by Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera to cancel Hidalgo and Morelos's excommunication penalties (León Zaragoza, 2007). One can wonder why a secular state would care for such matters if an excommunication is only relevant for Catholics and only exists within this religious tradition. It reflects how particular Catholic religious traditions echo with relevance within the Mexican state.

The independence from Spain happened on September 27, 1821. Yet, it did not bring freedom of worship, conscience, or speech. The Catholic religious monopoly is reaffirmed in the Constitutions of 1811, 1813, and 1814 (Museo de las constituciones Mexico).

Significant contact with the Protestant tradition happened on April 29, 1827, when the Scottish missionary James Diego Thomson arrived in Mexico with 10,000 Bibles. Thomson came representing the British and Foreign Bible Society and found support to sell the Bible with Catholic clergy and various prominent Liberals as Dr. José María Luis Mora (Martinez Garcia, 2013). Thomson traveled throughout Mexico, developing a particular interest in indigenous peoples' rights, urging the Mexican Secretary of State to provide education and assure them justice (Martinez Garcia, 2013). Thomson's efforts included translating the Bible into the indigenous languages: Nahuatl, Otomi, and Huasteco. This way, the desire that was in the hearts of some of the first Catholic missionaries to share the gospel in indigenous languages became a reality 300 years later, with the Protestant tradition, and this time was not stopped.

4. The (ongoing) pursuit of secularization in Mexico

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Mexican President Benito Juárez decreed *Las Leyes de Reforma* of 1857, establishing the Act of Freedom of Worship. *La Reforma* proposed the separation between Church and State, a civil registration system, the secularization of cemeteries, the nationalization of church properties, and religious communities' elimination. The Catholic Church opposed these reforms, contributing to the *Guerra de Los Tres Años* between liberals and conservatives, achieving the establishment of the second Mexican empire for a short period (1864-1865) with Maximiliano de Absburgo. The aim of the Catholic Church defending a monarchical government was to preserve a social project beneficial for them, based on landowning oligarchy (Gomez P., 2007, p. 69).

Further progress in religious freedom came during the ruling of the (very controversial) President Porfirio Díaz. He wanted to encourage private investors from overseas hence, incentivizing conciliation between Protestants and Catholics. The campaigns of *temperancia* (sobriety) during 1884-1910, discouraging the use of alcohol and tobacco, among other expressions of the Protestant ethic, pleased Díaz' government (Barocio Castells, 2016).

The Catholic Church remained strong; hence, when the Mexican Revolution started in 1910, that supported the coup that deposed president Francisco I. Madero. This event strongly marked the despise of the revolutionaries towards the Catholic Church and Catholic political parties (Gomez P., 2007, p. 71). The new Constitution of 1917 denied legal personality to the Church, limited its control over the social administration, and forbade it to participate in politics and own property. President Plutarco Elías Calles applied this legislation in 1926 and ordered intense surveillance of the Catholic Church. The parishioners were offended, seeing the temples *profaned* with the army's presence and the frequent interruption of ceremonies. Jean Meyer (University of Kent, 2020) states that a small yet influential group showed opposition by suspending the mass in all churches of the country. Although most bishops did not agree with this measure, they followed through, causing La Cristiada, another civil war, to rise under the

slogan *¡Viva Cristo Rey!* (Hail, Christ King!) from 1926-1929; 1932-1938. It is estimated that 20,000-50,000 people died in *La Cristiada*. It was a very disadvantaged and bloody war because, despite the religious zeal of the peasants and commitment to their cause, they confronted a better-trained army (Meyer, 1954, p. 252).

Through it all, Protestantism could expand discreetly and resiliently. 700 Protestant temples managed to exist in Mexico by 1970. Later, Mexico signed various international legal documents committing to respect and protect human rights, including the right to religious freedom. Significant changes were made in the Constitution in 1992, allowing *all* religious associations to have legal personality (Martinez de Codes, 2001, p. 527-528). Still, the centuries of promoted and state-endorsed hostility towards Protestants remained sealed in the Mexican identity.

VI. Chiapas. Complexities of the most religiously diverse Mexican state.

Chiapas is a state located in the southeast of Mexico on the border with Guatemala. It has seven different ecosystems and is placed second in national, ethnic diversity. 3,406 million people inhabit a territorial extension of 73,310 km (INEGI, 2010).

The first Protestant missionary in Chiapas was the Mexican José Coffin Sánchez. In the nineteenth century, he traveled by foot and trained local converts, among them indigenous people, to continue the evangelizing mission (Green, J, 2017).

Chiapas is the most religiously diverse Mexican state, and at the same time, the most religiously intolerant. 78% of Mexicans declare themselves as Catholics, yet in Chiapas, the percentage goes to 54%, with an average of 3 million Catholics and 2 million Protestants. Los Altos, the focus of this case study, is the most religiously diverse, with prominent mosques, Jewish temples, and other houses of worship (Dominguez, 2021).

1. Indigenous legal systems *Fiestas Patronales* and *Caciques*

Indigenous Mexicans follow a type of Catholic Traditionalism that contains expressions of Pre-Hispanic religions that include nature's worship. For them, the Catholic priest and the *curandera*, a healer recognized with the ability to contact the spiritual world, can talk to the divinities and intercede for favors (Fr. Áviles, personal communication, 2017).

The Western legal system includes written rules, and it takes time for new laws to be approved. In the case of the Indigenous legal system, it is primarily Oral Tradition. It is more flexible, adaptable to circumstances, and of quick implementation (Kraemer, 1998). Among indigenous people in Mexico, decisions are usually taken through the *Asamblea Comunitaria*, a traditional and autonomous legal system where civil, political, and religious matters are equally discussed. Religion and government are not separated in the indigenous worldview.

An expression of indigenous social order is *Fiestas Patronales*, religious festivities to worship a specific Catholic saint. *Fiestas patronales* depict the community's centuries of history and tradition and bring people together in a celebration that could last several days. Nevertheless, in these vivid cultural expressions, religious intolerance flourishes. Due to the vast resources needed for the festivities, asking for loans from *caciques* is quite common. *Caciques* are small dictators (Varela Ortega, 1973); they usually belong to the community and can abuse others less privileged because of financial status and power.

In Chiapas, *caciques* control political and economic resources and monopoly the distribution of specific products such as soft drinks. Their control is such that during the 70s, they could execute decisions made by the *Asamblea Comunitaria* using Coke trucks to expel hundreds of Protestant families from Chamula, Chiapas (Avendaño, personal communication, 2015). When indigenous people become Protestants, they stop engaging in *Fiestas Patronales* because celebrating a saint goes against their new religious identity. They also stopped drinking alcohol since the type of Protestantism spread in Chiapas discourages its consumption. As Protestants do not participate in the *Fiestas Patronales*, the

spread of Protestantism constitutes a loss of economic and political power for the *cacique*.

2. Religious intolerance as a source of Human Insecurity

There are different levels of violence in the acts of religious intolerance. The first level is threats to *ontological* security (Shani, 2017, p. 282) when there is psychological violence and discrimination (e.g., they are furiously interrupted in their homes when they host prayer meetings). Suppose the harassment continues to increase in intensity, harming them physically. In that case, individuals can become Internal Displaced People (IDPs), otherwise they get killed or put into jail for several years under false accusations. The most severe cases of religious intolerance have resulted in rapes (Henriquez, 2011) and murders.

Religion influences the way people react to conflict. For indigenous Protestants, it has been to "put the other cheek," forgiving and asking for forgiveness to their attackers, aiming to reconcile with them, yet the hostilities continue escalating. Usually, indigenous Protestants do not get attention from the government until they become IDPs and must relocate to the closest cities. The testimony of a family explains,

L: Is there any chance for you to return to your community?

T1: No, not anymore. They won't let us. We made an effort; we wanted to return. We have tried twice to talk to the authorities... He received a letter, saying that everything was ready and that we could return. Even the civil defense was going to take our things for us. We went there, we entered the community, and we saw that all the people had gathered there. Then they went for the apostle ... The civil defense was there to record everything, but the people... [the community] piled up and took the camera away from them. But even with everything [the support of civil defense], we could not stay in the house; we could not enter [to the community]. Civil defense sent an agent to protect us, a guy called Francisco, but the people from the community blocked the road so they couldn't go through, they could not

enter, so they headed back, and we were left alone. We were scared off with stones, machetes, and everything, so we made our way back [to the city of San Cristobal].

3. Religious IDPs

Indigenous people in Mexico live by subsistence farming. All their daily life and supplies come from the farm measured by hectares. Some lands belong to the *ejidal* [farming cooperative], and others are private and belong to individuals from the community. The above-mentioned *Asamblea Comunitaria* decides when an indigenous Protestant becomes an IDP. The state has reacted in various ways, none of them effective enough to protect religious freedom and the life of the victims of religious intolerance. Based on the testimonies of the victims and local support entities, the following table summarizes the reaction of the local government to acts of religious intolerance:

Table 1. Local government responses to acts of religious intolerance

Acts of religious intolerance	Reaction of the local government
1) Invasion of private land.	1) No reaction
2) Confiscation of private land.	2) No reaction or; buying the confiscated land from the attackers at the cost they have established.
3) Death threats	3) Visiting the community looking for "dialogue and conciliation" between the attackers and the victims.
4) Extreme intimidation with the use of physical and psychological violence and total deprivation of essential services (water and electricity).	4) "Dialogue and conciliation" by paying fines established by the attackers as the only condition to "forgive" the "rebels" and re-establish essential services.
5) Expulsion from the community.	5) Victim relocation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. 1) In temporary shelters in the city (houses or buildings), the government rents. 5. 2) In lessened land, the government buys <i>lotes</i> between 10 m² and 20 m². In contrast, the victim's confiscated land is between 10,000 to 60,000 meters.

During the relocations, people are mostly moved into crowded temporary shelters, living in even higher levels of social exclusion and sadness because they cannot express their indigeneity the way they used to. They change their lifestyle from living in the field, surrounded by nature and on-farm consumption, to living in the city, forced to become employees and servants because their level of education and 'skills' in the town are not competitive. They are primarily illiterates, and their Spanish level is insufficient even for daily life communication. Interviewing a group of families living for seven years in what was supposed to be a temporary shelter, they said,

L: How are you doing in comparison to when you were living... in your home?

T: We lost the chance to grow our vegetables. Now we have to buy everything...

L: Did your husbands leave for work?

T: My husband is resting [today]...

L: What jobs have your husbands found here in San Cristobal?

T: The ones that know, work in construction, the other ones are helpers. That's what they've been able to find.

L: Back in your community, what were your husbands' jobs?

T: In the maize fields, on open-air, planting beans. They even had horses. They finish there, and they've come to work here.

Often, forced displacement happens suddenly, and they are not allowed to take any possessions with them, as said:

My mom came running to retrieve her shawl, but they didn't let her. They wanted us to sign the statement that said that we were willingly leaving. We asked them to give us three days to retrieve our belongings, but not even that. So they said, "You only have 15 minutes". So then we finally get out of there, all of us, even the assemblyman. We went home to retrieve our things.

They didn't give us 15 minutes, in less than five minutes we had to get our stuff. "Close the home now, close it!" (They said). So we left with nothing, almost nothing. You would've thought that we left everything packed, but I could only get my backpack. My dad and my mom, whatever they could reach for. So, yes, there is a lot of pain for what the community did to us...

The attackers know that they can profit from the conflict, for they can harvest the fields and keep the Protestants' properties if they can expel them. As it says in one of the testimonies,

T3: They took away a hectare of corn that was ready to harvest. They did it following the instructions of the commissioner... and their people...

NGO r: Were they in groups of 20 or 30 people? Have they already distributed your land? Now, do they consider it as their own?

T3: That's right, they've already been distributed. Even our orchard, where we had bananas, coffee, and cacao.

T4: We were going to arrive at the place, but it was already taken. I even sold the donkey that used to carry my fruit because there was no way I could get inside my land. If I stayed in my land, they would threaten to tie me up with a load of corn. But why, if I am the owner of the land? I have the papers of when I bought it with... [the name of the attacker] himself.

Based on the interviews, the perseverance of the attackers to force the Protestants to change their minds and *volver a ser católico* [go back to be Catholic] demonstrates that the religious motivator for the expulsions is primary. The attackers are often family of the victims; they have grown together as neighbors and friends. Their lack of *tolerance*, understanding, and acceptance of the religious experience of the Protestants turns to frustration and then into hate. Hence, harassment gradually increases, pushing the Protestants to despair, sickness, and hunger. Sometimes Indigenous Protestants surrender to the hostilities and give up their freedom of worship, accepting to contribute to the

Fiestas Patronales. Yet, more often, despite all, indigenous Protestants do not deny their religious beliefs, and the Catholic majority expels them from the community, violating their human security with the support of police and the local government. Criminals are rarely arrested, and when that happens, they can quickly escape jail time (various actors, personal communication, 2015 and 2017).

4. Good intentions, tensions, and the other side of the victims

Fr. José Áviles, Vicar of Peace and Justice of Chiapas, considers the intense tension between Catholics and Protestants makes it challenging to come together even to work on social projects of common concern (personal communication, 2017). Despite the intent of regular clergy to promote respect and tolerance, these appeals are frequently ignored by the parishioners. Fr. Áviles argues the authority of the Catholic priest is usually less relevant than what one can acknowledge. People follow the *uso y la costumbre* [custom and tradition] first; listening to the priest comes second.

Problems also arise despite all the efforts of NGOs, Protestant churches, and individual human rights defenders to help the victims. Among Protestants, the main problem is the corruption of lawyers or Pastors, who takes money from the victims promising to solve their cases and disappear. Others have used religious intolerance as political propaganda aiming to be appointed for a government position. However, the most common attitude is indifference and ignorance from privileged Protestants living in the cities who have overlooked the suffering of those in need despite living in comfort and safety.

NGOs encounter cases of victims of religious intolerance who, after receiving support develop an attitude of dependency, victimization, and self-pity. At times, political conflicts in indigenous communities are falsely labeled as religious to get attention from the media and economic resources. The reason why NGOs and others are developing strategies to discern if a conflict is what it seems.

As final thoughts, culture "is what permits the individual to have a bios: to enjoy a life endowed with meaning and dignity; and to lead a life considered worthy of sacrifice" (Shani, 2014, p. 65). Yet, culture can also be a commodity with indigenous peoples' expressions in high demand (Ryan & Aicken, 2007). When indigenous people convert to another religion, such as Protestantism, they *rupture* with the imaginary that sees them as submissive and unchanging (Martinez Garcia, 2005). The cases of religious intolerance are complex, and on the side of the victims, there is still a sense of victory, hope, and purpose. Their faith in Jesus has been their "weapon of the weak" that has achieved something better for the next generations (Scott, 2008, p. 29). An IDP woman who has been living in a government shelter for five years shared,

My grandson sometimes comes to visit me. During his visits, I shared the gospel with him, and he believed. His friends know he is Evangelical and mock him for that, but he does not care. He still believes. He says he wants to study to be a pastor and shares the gospel with them. He says things in the community are hard but not as they used to be when they expelled us. I have faith... our suffering now living in these tiny rooms is not in vain.

VII. Conclusions

This research has argued that religious intolerance in Mexico has its roots in the historical constitutional monopoly of Catholicism, since colonization until *La Reforma* in 1857, which constructed a Mexican identity with a despise towards Protestants.

Religious intolerance is currently present more severely in indigenous communities where the indigenous legal system *Asamblea Comunitaria* facilitates efficient discriminatory actions towards Protestants. Despite the prevailing family connections between the attackers and the victims, the religious distinctions weigh heavier and primarily. It is an environment where the expulsion of the Protestants is encouraged by the *caciques*, as it is more profitable for them and their associates to keep the *status quo*.

Religious intolerance constitutes a violation of the *human security* of individuals because it physically harms and deprives them of the right to live a *life with dignity and free from fear*. It is also hurting the *ontological security* of the victims due to the constant harassment and discrimination.

The measures taken by the Mexican state have contributed to the problem by pleasing the demands of the attackers without punishing them. When indigenous people become IDPs, cultural expressions that allow one to *experience oneself as a whole person with a sense of agency* are banished. By placing Indigenous Protestants IDPs in the cities, the state deprives them of crucial elements in their indigeneity. From subsistence farming in their ancestral lands to being employed as servants, "underqualified" for the city life demands, living in usually crowded shelters at the expense of charity and government support.

Against all odds, Protestantism continues to spread in Indigenous communities, being their faith in Jesus a *weapon of the weak* that leaves a precedent that allows the next generation to live a life with *choices*, encouraged to pursue freedom of worship, even as a religious minority.

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**Religious Intolerance as Human Insecurity:
Voices of Indigenous Protestant IDPs from Chiapas, Mexico**

<Summary>

Silvia Luz González Márquez

Religious intolerance in Mexico has its origins in the Spanish colonization and in the Catholic Church-State relations implementing a policy that forged a Mexican identity with repulsion towards Protestants. This intolerance is widely recognized and most severely manifested in indigenous communities. The indigenous' legal system, *Asamblea Comunitaria*, facilitates an effective execution of decisions against Indigenous Protestants. This situation violates their human security, *the right to live in freedom and dignity, free from fear and want* (CHS, 2003), and the *ontological security* that allows them *to feel secure in who they are*. The Catholic majority exercise violence primarily with a religious motive, which aims to force their neighbors to deny their adopted Protestant way of living. The *caciques* use their power to profit from the conflict and help to expel indigenous Protestants from the communities. The *testimonies* of the victims and independent religious freedom advocates share how the Mexican state has contributed to the problem by not punishing the attackers and pleasing their demands. Indigenous Protestants living as IDPs in the city are deprived of the essential elements for their indigenous identity. Unable to continue living on subsisting farming surrounded by nature in their ancestral lands, they become saddened and lowly waged servants in a city that does not speak their language. Against all odds, Protestantism continues to expand and becomes a *weapon of the weak* that provides an alternative source of hope for the next generation that witnessed their faith and resilience.