

# BREAKING THE SIEGE, FIGHTING FOR LIFE: 3

## For a New Internationalist Movement of the Oppressed

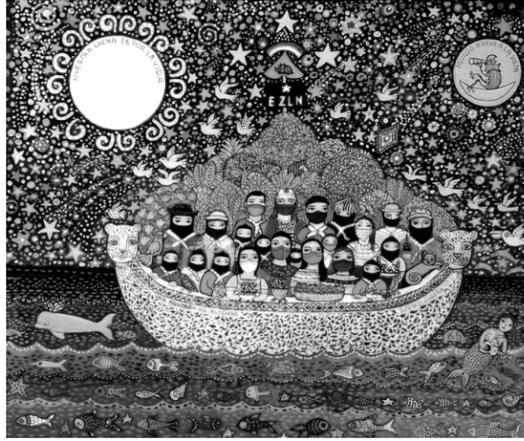
### *The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) Begin a journey around the world in the defense of life.*

The rebel communities of Chiapas Mexico have suffered violent harassment and siege by both legal and illegal military forces of the various State administrations, for more than 27 years, regardless of what political party was in power.

Such was the case from Carlos Salinas de Gortari's administration (1988-1994) which bombed communities, to Ernesto Zedillo's (1994-2000) pathological racism and lack of authority that led him to abandon the San Andrés Agreements, which had granted autonomy, recognition, and rights to the indigenous population of Mexico. Instead, he carried out massive military operations that led to a bloody low-intensity war implemented by paramilitary groups trained by the Army, as well as welfare policies aimed at tearing the fabric of the communities. Vicente Fox (2000-2006) pretended to recover the agreements signed by the State and the Zapatista command representatives, but – like everything else about him – his actions eventually turned out to be just a media masquerade, validating more racism and marginalization of indigenous peoples condemned to vegetate as vulnerable populations destined for extinction. Felipe Calderón (2006-2012) and Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) continued the war throughout the country, while they cornered, attacked and sought to divide the Zapatista communities by all imaginable means, and with a variety of political forces at all levels of the State and all parties; Institutional Revolutionary Party **PRI**, National Action Party **PAN**, Democratic Revolution Party **PRD** and Green Party.

Under Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018- serving till 2024), despite his demagoguery and all his alluding to leftist traditions, clothed with the old neo-indigenous **PRI**, the siege against EZLN was reinforced with the help of more military forces, and welfare programs, (now seen as charitable) and reconstituted paramilitary groups siege against the EZLN, adding a wall of lies and **slander** against the Zapatistas and those who struggle to protect the life under threat – now even more – by neocolonial mega-construction projects, with which the president seeks to ingratiate himself with the capitalists that dominate the planet.

However, not even the entire force of the State – as rulers tend to boast – has been able to either silence or obliterate the Zapatista rebels, whose blazing appearance on the map on January 1, 1994 broke the siege by expanding themselves territorially, creating autonomous municipalities, coinciding with the influence of the eruption of **Popocatepetl** Volcano. They have used all kinds of initiatives that led them all over Mexico once and again – from national consultations, delegates' trips, the Color of the Earth March, the Other Campaign, the 13 Baktun of 2012, to proposing an Indigenous



presidential candidacy with María de Jesús "Marichuy" Patrio, as the spokesperson for the **National Indigenous Congress-Indigenous Governing Council (CNI-CIG)**. Neither the militarized police's fences nor the political-social and media ones ("I neither see you nor hear you") and even walls of disgrace from a chieftain president, are of any use against peoples determined to fight and build alternatives for collective life through self-government and self-management. This is why, still in August 2019, surrounded and besieged in a thousand ways, the EZLN announced a new breaking of the siege, expanding its territory, already vast, with more autonomous municipalities and new "Caracoles," ruled by its **Good Government Councils**, now numbering up to sixteen.

They are breaking fences, making silence thunderous, making the invisible visible resoundingly. Not giving in, persisting in the rebellious folly of building alternatives on lands mined by the irrationality of a capitalist system considered fatal and insurmountable, and eventually showing that the excluded and oppressed, the outcasts and condemned of the Earth, are those who really want to and can fight a social order without remedy, existing by extreme inequality, pernicious for all humanity. These are the skills, traits and strategies that guide the Zapatistas in their already long resistance against death and in their claim to contribute to linking the struggles for life, for equality, freedom, justice, self-government and self-management, with the fight to protect the planet, endangered by Capitalism that has spread everywhere, threatening with wars and an unhinged competition for profits a world that this system degrades, devastates and makes uninhabitable.

Five-hundred years after the alleged Spanish conquest and the destruction of Mexico-Tenochtitlan City, the EZLN once again took people by surprise, **breaking the siege** by setting sail to the sea. Instead of taking refuge in their territory to focus on advancing the construction of their autonomy, their new life and their non-hierarchical, egalitarian social relations, the Zapatistas remake themselves again, updating the perspective of their struggle: **"The territory of our actions is now clearly delineated – it's within the planet called**

**'Earth', located in what we call the Solar System.**" They know that what they have built is not an island of resistance that can survive in solitude in the middle of a raging capitalist ocean. **"The survival of humanity depends on the destruction of capitalism,"** which is precisely what destroys Mother Nature causing catastrophe after catastrophe and generating pandemics that isolate, exclude and abandon, and undermine human existence. **"The destruction in any corner of the world has repercussions on the entire planet"** That's why each one must fight in his corner, wherever one is, and in each one's way, according to each one's conditions and traditions.

That is the meaning of the new adventure of the EZLN, now accompanied by the **CNI-CIG**, to share, not only pain, but experiences, creativity and imagination, using critical thinking; with the multiple and inexhaustible sensibilities, and diversity of very different peoples, of societies that do not stop resisting despite the advances of the right; of the rene-gades of the left and of loneliness in the face of pandemics. We must take back the streets to fight, sharing feelings, but then articulating actions, social practices that organize collective resistance, and building collective alternatives for the defense of life, of the Planet, that is, the destruction of an aberrant capitalist system whose modernity might bring us back to the Stone Age.

The Zapatista landing in Vigo, Spain, is an invasion of the Europe that resists and fights, seeking the revenge of the native peoples that can't help but find their equals, spreading their fraternal solidarity towards those who resist every war, every conquest, every deprecation that an archaic and decaying social order never ceased to propagate as an inevitable condition for its development and persistence. It is the search to remake the internationalism of the oppressed in the face of the globalization of capital. It is the search to remake the world for everyone from below. It is a longing for the future, a bet for having memories of tomorrow, to build collectively on very different worlds that can only continue to exist as long as they build a new one:

### **A world where many worlds fit.**

EZLN "Squadron 421" landed at Vigo, in Spain's northwestern Galicia region aboard the sailboat **La Montaña**, June 22nd completing a 7 week voyage from Isla Mujeres Quintana Roo, Mexico, reversing the route taken 500 years ago during the Spanish conquest of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán. With the message: **"They did not conquer us; we are still here resisting."** The group plans to meet with progressive groups in 30 countries and territories.



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## Women Reject Taliban Rule

### **Is Armed Resistance Their Only Option?**



**Anti-Soviet Afghan Warriors 1980's**

Women have taken up guns in northern and central Afghanistan, marching in the streets in the hundreds and sharing pictures of themselves with assault rifles on social media, in a show of defiance as the Taliban make sweeping gains nationwide. One of the biggest demonstrations was in central Ghor province, where hundreds of women turned out at the weekend, waving guns and chanting anti-Taliban slogans. The public demonstrations, at a time of urgent threat from the militants, are a reminder of how frightened many women are about what Taliban rule could mean for them and their families.

"There were some women who just wanted to inspire security forces, just symbolic, but many more were ready to go to the battlefields," said Halima Parastish, the head of the women's directorate in Ghor and one of the marchers. "That includes myself. I and some other women told the governor around a month ago that we're ready to go and fight."

The Taliban have been sweeping across rural Afghanistan, taking dozens of districts including in places such as northern Badakhshan province, which 20 years ago was an anti-Taliban stronghold. They now have multiple provincial capitals in effect under siege. In areas they control, the Taliban have already brought in restrictions on women's education, their freedom of movement and their clothing, activists and residents of those areas say. In one area, flyers were circulating demanding that women put on burqas.

Even women from extremely conservative rural areas aspire to more education, greater freedom of movement and a greater role in their families, according to those whose voices are rarely heard: **"No woman wants to fight, I just want to continue my education and stay far away from the violence, but conditions made me and other women stand up,"** said a journalist in her early 20s from northern Jowzjan, where there is a history of women fighting.

She attended a day's training on weapons handling in the provincial capital, which is currently besieged. She asked not to be named in case it falls to the Taliban. **"I don't want the country under the control of people who treat women the way they do. We took up the guns to show if we have to fight, we will."** She said they would have one advantage over men if they faced the Taliban. **"They are frightened of being killed by us, they consider it shameful."**

For conservative militants, facing women in battle can be humiliating. Isis fighters in Syria were reportedly more frightened of dying at the hands of female Kurdish forces than being killed by men. It's rare, but not unprecedented, for Afghan women to take up arms, particularly in less conservative parts of the country. Last year a teenager, Qamar Gul, became famous nationwide after fighting off a group of Taliban who had killed her parents. The militants included her own husband. In Baghlan province, a woman called Bibi Aisha Habibi became the country's only female warlord in the wake of the Soviet invasion and the civil war that followed. She was known as Commander Kaftar, or **Pigeon**. And in northern Balkh, 39-year-old Salima Mazari has recently been fighting on the frontlines in Charkint, where she is the district governor.

Women have also joined Afghanistan's security forces over the past two decades, including training as helicopter pilots, although they have faced discrimination and harassment from colleagues and are rarely found on the frontlines.

The Ghor provincial governor, Abdulzahir Faizzada, said in a phone interview that some of the women who came out in the streets of Firozkoh, the provincial capital, had already battled the Taliban, and most had endured violence from the group.

**"The majority of these women were those who had recently escaped from Taliban areas. They have already been through war in their villages, they lost their sons and brothers, they are angry,"** he said. Faizzada added that he would train women who did not have experience with weapons, if the government in Kabul approved it.

The Taliban's conservative rules are particularly unwelcome in Ghor, where women traditionally wear headscarves rather than covering themselves fully with the burqa, and work in fields and villages beside their men, Parastish said. The Taliban have banned women even from taking care of animals or working the land in areas of Ghor they control, she added. They have closed girls' schools, ordered women not to leave home without a male guardian and even banned them from gathering for weddings, saying only men should attend.

Women from these areas were among those who marched. **"More than a dozen women have escaped from Allahyar in Shahrak district last week and came to us and asked for guns to go and fight for their lands and freedom. The same situation is in Charsadda region,"** Parastish said.

**"Women said: 'We are getting killed and injured without defending ourselves, why not fight back?' They were telling us that at least two women were in labour in their region, with no medical things around and they couldn't come with them."**

For now, she said, the main thing holding the women back was the men in power.

**"The governor said there is no need for us now and they will let us know."**

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