

**Handout**

# El Salvador Timeline

**Directions:** As you read through the timeline with your group, circle each historical event that you think might have helped to create the push factor that you've chosen to explore.

<b>1821</b>	El Salvador gained independence from Spain, but the plantation-based ( <i>hacienda</i> ) economic system put in place by the Spanish remained. The wealthiest creole families controlled most of the land and the government.
<b>1880–1890</b>	The government of El Salvador took communal land from peasants and gave it to wealthy elites. Many Salvadorans were forced to leave their land and become laborers in the coffee industry.
<b>1930s</b>	The Great Depression struck El Salvador. Many Salvadorans (who already lost their land) now lost their jobs.
<b>1932</b>	<p>Indigenous communities in El Salvador, along with some non-indigenous workers, organized to demand their rights and mounted an insurrection against the government. In response, the Salvadoran government killed between 10,000 and 30,000 people, most of whom were indigenous, in a massacre known as La Matanza. Power became even more concentrated in the hands of wealthy elites and the military.</p> <p>Over the following decades, thousands of Salvadorans fled the country in search of work and better conditions, and indigenous people were forced to assimilate or go into hiding.</p>
<b>1969</b>	El Salvador and Honduras fought a war, and Honduras expelled 300,000 Salvadorans who had been living there. This increased economic and social pressure in El Salvador, and many people were unable to find work.
<b>1979–1992</b>	<p>El Salvador fought a bloody civil war. The United States provided aid to the government during the war in the form of money, military equipment, and military training.</p> <p>1 million people (about one-fifth of the population) were displaced. Approximately 750,000 Salvadorans were killed and thousands more were tortured or disappeared. The government committed more than 85% of these atrocities.</p> <p>At the end of the war, people in the country were militarized and traumatized by the violence.</p>

<p><b>1990</b></p>	<p>During the war, the United States denied 98% of asylum applications from Salvadorans, since it was aiding the Salvadoran government.</p> <p>In 1990, the United States government agreed, under pressure, to grant Salvadorans fleeing violence Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in the United States. People who have TPS may not apply for permanent residence or citizenship in the United States, unlike those who are granted asylum. TPS may also be revoked at any time.</p> <p>By 1992, approximately 187,000 Salvadorans with TPS lived in the United States.</p>
<p><b>1990s</b></p>	<p>The United States government and international organizations pressured developing countries around the world, including El Salvador, to cut spending on social programs, especially education.</p> <p>Some Salvadorans in the United States joined gangs and then were later deported back to El Salvador, bringing their gang organizing with them. The US government did not share their criminal records with the Salvadoran government, which meant they were not imprisoned when they arrived. Gang violence grew to much more extreme levels in El Salvador due to the pervasive inequality, violence, and corruption.</p>
<p><b>2000s</b></p>	<p>The economy of El Salvador continued to decline. Many young Salvadorans joined gangs in search of economic and social opportunities, which were difficult to find otherwise.</p>
<p><b>2001</b></p>	<p>Two deadly earthquakes struck El Salvador. As a result, more Salvadoran migrants were granted TPS in the United States. In 2016, there were approximately 195,000 Salvadorans in the United States who held TPS.</p>

**Sources:** Cecilia Menjívar and Andrea Gómez Cervantes, “El Salvador: Civil War, Natural Disasters, and Gang Violence Drive Migration, Migration Policy Institute,” August 29, 2018 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/el-salvador-civil-war-natural-disasters-and-gang-violence-drive-migration>.

Christopher M. White, *The History of El Salvador* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2009).

With input from Victor H. Interiano.