

8. The approach to truth in Coahuila

This project is succeeding in producing a reasonably precise mapping of the criminal violence and the role played by the State, society, and victims. To understand what made this possible it is necessary to go back to the origin of the agreements between the CEAV, the victims' groups, the Colmex, the CNDH, and the Coahuila State Government.

In 2015 Jacobo Dayán published a column criticizing the CEAV and Jaime Rochín, who was president of the CEAV at the time. Rochín sought out Dayán and they discussed the issue, and the latter proposed that they seek innovative methods of achieving integral reparations. One such method was to make an agreement with an institution to carry out research to help clarify the truth.

A CEAV official, Miriam Morales Sanhueza, was participating in the Seminar on Violence and Peace at El Colegio de México, a public institution and established the contacts for initial talks. In March 2016 an agreement was signed to investigate the tragedies of Allende, Coahuila and San Fernando, Tamaulipas. Luis Raúl González Pérez, president of the National Human Rights Commission joined the effort.

The governor of Coahuila, Rubén Moreira Valdés, was receptive to this proposal and handed over an initial dossier of information on Allende. Meanwhile, the Colegio de México signed an agreement with the Inter-American Academy of Human Rights, at that time part of the Autonomous University of Coahuila. At the same time, direct communication was established with victims' support groups in the state.

In October 2016 the Seminar on Violence and Peace at El Colegio de México presented the report *State of Neglect: Los Zetas, the State, Society and the Victims of San Fernando, Tamaulipas (2010) and Allende, Coahuila (2011)*. In January 2017 it was presented in Saltillo. In the course of this journey we met with the four organizations that defend victims of disappearance in Coahuila: Alas de Esperanza (Allende), Familias Unidas (Piedras Negras), Fray Juan de Larios (Saltillo) and Grupo Vida (Torreón). At this meeting the groups expressed their interest in continuing the project and agreed to make their archives available to us.

This new understanding between government, victims' groups, media and academics has worked because the results have been considered useful by the victims' groups, the CNDH, the CEAV and the Coahuila state government. They have also been well received by others interested in the subject.

Four factors made it possible to close the gap between academia, victims and government officials:

- a) Accept that organized crime is a threat to society and the State and that it is in the interests of both to confront it with research aimed at strengthening the culture of peace and institutions that support peace. This appears straightforward, but the huge level of mistrust between citizens and governments makes it less so.

- b) Always take on board the perspectives, aspirations and experiences of victims and organizations that represent them. They deserve to be treated with dignity.
- c) Any understanding should be grounded in concrete, viable and rigorous projects. In investigations of this kind it is essential to treat information with respect, verifying each piece of data.
- d) Respect the spirit and the letter of agreements made between the different parties.

Knowledge of the events that took place in Coahuila has been, and continues to be, a collective effort. The Seminar on Violence and Peace has several objectives for future years.

- a) Expand the research about disappearances to the regions of La Laguna and Saltillo.
- b) Complete the stories of the four victims' groups that have worked to locate disappeared people in the state.
- c) Establish the total number of victims of the Zeta vengeance.
- d) Reconstruct the government strategy followed in Coahuila to regain control.

These investigations are part of two broader objectives:

- a) Establish a comprehensive overview of the Zeta's methods and way of thinking, and how they interacted with the State and society.
- b) Clarify the negative and positive role played by the United States, as an actor that holds joint responsibility for the cross-border violence. In this text we sought to establish its material responsibility.

State and society are obliged to unite behind Article 1 of the Constitution: the State must prevent, investigate, sanction and repair violations of human rights, in the terms established by the law. A concrete way of approaching this ideal is to make Coahuila the first state to have a more precise cartography about violence and peace.