

Statement from organisations and collectives in Australia: the EZLN is not alone.

25 January, 2019

To our comrades Zapatistas in Chiapas,

To our comrades in Mexico and in the world.

Some of us are old enough to remember the stunning images of indigenous rebels storming San Cristobal de Las Casas in 1994. We took in the reports with awe and excitement. These visions became emblematic of a wave of global struggles against late capitalism's global trade plans and the subsequent impoverishment of the majority world's peoples and lands. They captured the attentions of many different perspectives, under a banner of global resistance that continues to shape the world we know today.

Ten years later, some of us gathered together to form an organization in Australia aiming to think about Zapatista politics and critically engage with the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. Most of us had never been to Mexico, let alone to the Zapatistas' autonomous communities. This didn't matter. We could learn from the words of our Zapatista comrades regardless of where in the world we were. True, the situation that we confront in various cities in Australia was (and continues to be) very different to the situation lived in communities like La Garrucha or 22 de Diciembre. But we felt that we shared a desire for a world in common, not a world at the disposal of big capitalist ambitions to excavate the mineral resources, to destroy the forests and to put us all to work at the service of the bosses' wallet. We too live on lands where genocide of Indigenous peoples continues to occur in order for capital to command the lands and the peoples who belong to the land. While Australia may be rich as a nation, it continues to have some of the world's worst rates of curable diseases and poverty among its Aboriginal peoples. The Zapatistas put into words what many of people here had felt for a long time.

By 2005 some more of us had arrived, we were (we are) young. And since then we read and discussed the Sixth with diverse groups and individuals in the places where we live, and with comrades from the Intergalactic. We thought then and continue to think now about how the Zapatistas ask questions about the world, with their periscopes inverted, looking for the resistances and rebellions that are always happening from below. It was tricky translating "desde abajo y a la izquierda" in English. We hope, even though the translation continues to sound a bit weird, that we have been able to carry this into the many struggles we continue to be part of in our communities and workplaces.

Fast-forward ten years. More comrades arrive asking about the experience of the Zapatistas and about how people in other places struggle against capitalism from where they are. How strange that the multinational free trade order that the EZLN responded to has been declared dead by the loudest head of the hydra, the President of the USA. In some ways the world has indeed changed since we first learned of our comrades in Chiapas' struggle. As capitalism responds to our struggles its strategies are bound to change, but the dignity of our Zapatista comrades has endured. We see now that Mexico has a centrist-left government, a tool that seeks to divide and undermine the power of social movements. We echo the EZLN's total rejection of the Maya-Train and other mega-projects that seriously threaten the autonomous territories and ways of life of indigenous peoples. We have also seen in the Australian Labour Party's periods of government, where some of the most regressive policies for the organisation of labour, the policing of borders, the theft of Indigenous lands, the exploitation of education in the interests of capital not of students.

'Walking while asking questions' resonates with us as a method to grasp the shifting world order. Maybe the questions we need to ask on our walk here in so-called Australia are not exactly the same as those necessary in Mexico, maybe some of them are. But what we think is certain, is that

it is only through asking questions and struggling from below in our own contexts that we can build a world of struggles that can finally defeat the capitalist hydra.

We denounce any aggression on Zapatista territory by the Mexican State or by civilian groups and paramilitaries backed by the State. We hold the Mexican Government responsible for any confrontation that may arise as a result of attempt to seize Zapatista territory or undermine the Zapatistas capacity to democratically and peacefully organise their own lives.

Perhaps we are too far away to stop the Hydra's development projects or the threatening presence of the army in Chiapas, but we are part of building a world where these plans cannot come to fruition.

We know that the EZLN is not alone, we see evidence of this everyday.

Members of the former Mexico-Australia Solidarity Network

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Brisbane <https://www.facebook.com/unitebrisbane/>

Flood Media

Brisbane <https://www.floodmedia.org/about/>

Sydney with Honduras

Sydney <https://sydneywithhonduras.wordpress.com/>

Latin American Solidarity Network (LASNET)

Melbourne latinamericansolidaritynetwork.org

Jura Books

Sydney <https://www.jura.org.au/>