CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS 1969-1989

The main purpose of this chronology is to help the reader by reconstructing MSF's actions and public statements in regional and international news reports of the period. It is intended as a tool for this specific document, and not as an academic reference.

	Central America	MSF and Salvadoran Refugee Camps in Honduras
1969	The '100 Hours' or 'Soccer' War (fighting broke out in sports stadiums) between El Salvador and Honduras; tens of thousands of Salvadoran immigrants return home; increasing pressure around land and heightened social tensions in El Salvador.	
1970	Armed struggle resumes in El Salvador.	
1975	Guerrilla forces organise and expand their presence in the Salvadoran countryside – increased repression, particularly by paramilitary groups.	
1976	Agrarian reform in El Salvador stalled	
1979	**19 july 1979** Victorious 'Sandinistas' arrive in Managua, Nicaragua's capital. **15 october 1979** Overthrow of Salvadoran government elected in 1977 – populist junta forms, tries to pursue reforms but is destabilised by guerrillas, the oligarchy, and the army.	
1980	Progressive elements withdraw from the junta because of repression – upsurge in number of death squads – cycle of violence accelerates – creation of FDR, bringing together left-wing organisations and popular movements. **24 march 1980** Archbishop Romero of San Salvador, a vocal critic of the government, social injustice, and human rights abusesis assassinated – state of siege declared in El Salvador. **14 may 1980** Salvadoran army massacres Salvadoran refugees at the Sumpul River along the Honduras-El Salvador border. **October 1980** First wave of Salvadoran refugees in Honduras – the FMLN is formed, bringing together the five main guerrilla movements.	**October 1980** MSF begins providing medical assistance in La Virtud and Colomoncagua refugee camps for Salvadorans in Honduras.
1981	**January 1981** Ronald Reagan, elected President of the USA, takes over from Jimmy Carter – US military aid to El Salvador increases from $10 million to $35 million.	

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1981	**January 1981** FMLN's final offensive fails – civil war breaks out in El Salvador. Honduras accepts Salvadoran refugees, who are placed under army surveillance. **March 1981** Salvadoran army massacres Salvadoran refugees trying to cross the border at the Lempa River.	
1982	**First six months 1982** Wave of Miskito and Suma refugees from Nicaragua arrive in the Mosquitia region of Honduras.	**February1982** Forced closure of La Virtud border camp and relocation to Mesa Grande – 4,000 refugees choose to return to El Salvador. MSF accompanies them during relocation.
1983	Republicans win US congressional elections – reinforcement of US support for the Salvadoran government – start of US support for the 'Contras', anti-Sandinista movement in Nicaragua.	
1984	**May 1984** Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte elected president of El Salvador. **October 1984** Opening of dialogue between President Duarte and the FMLN-FDR – talks break off three months later.	**January-July 1984** Honduran military assassinates at least 20 Salvadoran refugees. **June 1984** Bodies of 14 Salvadorans found 25 km from the Mesa Grande camp. **September 1984** Transfer of refugees to Olanchito (Yore, central Honduras) is cancelled after committees' protest.
1985	US military aid to the Salvadoran government increases to $200 million.	Refugee committees become more radical. **August 1985** In Colomoncagua, committees try to create a martyr by killing a refugee wounded by Honduran soldiers – five refugees who disagree with committee leaders killed.

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1986		MSF takes over medical care in all camps from Caritas – alternating periods of tension and calm between MSF and the committees.
1987	**October 1987** Esquipulas Accords signed by the Contadora Group (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama) propose a framework for peace agreements in the region, including a ceasefire, reconciliation commission, amnesty and elections for El Salvador. **November 1987** The FDR pulls out of the FMLN and returns to El Salvador to take part in the political debate.	**October 1987** Refugees in Mesa Grande demonstrate against MSF's 'insensitivity' toward their problems. The first 4,500 Mesa Grande refugees repatriated to El Salvador.
1988	**March 1988** Far-right victory (ARENA) in the Salvadoran legislative elections. **March 1988-March 1989** War of attrition between FMLN and Salvadoran armed forces – incidents on Honduras-Nicaragua border – arrival of 2,000 US soldiers in Honduras. **End of may 1988** Salvadoran military offensives in the border regions of Chalatenango and Morazán.	**June 1988** Hunger strike organised by Colomoncagua and then Mesa Grande committees begins. **24 June 1988** UNHCR press release: 'Mortality rates in refugee camps lower than those of the Honduran population'. **30 June-1 july 1988** Marathon negotiations between MSF and the refugee committee in Colomoncagua. **July 1988** 'War of the press releases' between the committees and MSF begins (continues until MSF's departure).

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1988		**4 july 1988** A director of the Mesa Grande committee is assassinated by refugees who no longer want to work with the guerrillas – the killer and two family members are lynched. **7 july 1988** MSF receives a copy of a letter from the committees to UNHCR demanding that MSF withdraw from providing refugee assistance **8 july 1988** Rony Brauman, President o of MSF France Board of Directors, announces MSF's withdrawal from Colomoncagua and San Antonio refugee camps. **22 july 1988** MSF's Board decides to pull out of the camps on 31 December 1988 and not to undertake a press campaign. **30 July 1988** Demonstrations against MSF nurse in San Antonio – San Antonio medical warehouse attacked. **13 August 1988** MSF assists with repatriation of 1,200 Mesa Grande refugees – committees distribute a leaflet criticising MSF. **14 August** MSF team expelled from Colomoncagua camp – outside group takes over emergency care. **2 september** MSF warns UNHCR that its teams can no longer meet refugee health needs because teams are being threatened. **6 september 1988** UNHCR sends representatives to talk with the committees about 'the problem with MSF'.

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1988		**23 september 1988** MSF Board confirms its decision not to publicise its withdrawal from the Salvadoran refugee camps in Honduras. **30 september 1988** Three MSF workers who have gone to pick up the on-duty nurse in San Antonio are ambushed – MSF decides not to answer emergency calls any longer. **Mid-october 1988** René Backmann's article in the French magazine, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, compares Salvadoran guerrillas to the Khmer Rouge. **18 october 1988** Committees announce in the Salvadoran press that they have decided to expel MSF from the camps. **21 october 1988** MSF Board announces departure from the Salvadoran camps on 15 November. **16 november 1988** Bertrand de la Grange's article in the French daily *Le Monde*: 'To prevent backing the guerrilla grip on the camp population, MSF gives up assisting Salvadoran refugees in Honduras.' **26 november 1988** Rony Brauman's response in *Le Monde*: "I do not know if there are guerrillas in the camps." **26 december 1988** Alain Hertoghe's article in the French daily *La Croix*: Rony Brauman accuses the committees of wielding totalitarian control over the refugees.
1989	**March 1989** Alfredo Cristiani (ARENA = far right) elected as president of El Salvador.	**January 1989** MSF withdraws from Nicaraguan refugee camps in Honduras.

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1988		**12 september 1989** An article by a UN official in the Belgian daily, *Le Soir*, denounces the committees' grip on the camps, and UNHCR's powerlessness. Mentions MSF. **Last quarter 1989** MSF takes over medical care of massive numbers of Salvadoran refugees returning to Honduras.