



# Guatemala Human Rights **UPDATE**

Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

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## FUNDAMENTAL VIOLATIONS

### Mayor of Santa Ana, Petén Murdered

**2/13/05** - The Mayor of Santa Ana, Petén, MANUEL DE JESÚS GARRIDO ROSADO, was murdered on February 12, while driving with his wife and daughters to a farm in Calzada Mopán, Dolores, Petén. The authorities stated that this is not the first attack on the Rosado family. Two weeks earlier, a vehicle was stolen from the Rosado home.

The governor of Petén, Manuel Barquín, specifically demanded further investigation into the murder due to the increasing violence in the region.

### CC Annuls Dos Erres Case

**2/4/04** - The Constitutional Court (CC) seems to have annulled nearly all actions to date in the Dos Erres case, in which sixteen army soldiers are accused of massacring approximately 300 people in the town of Dos Erres, Libertad, Petén, in December 1982. However, there are reports of a CC resolution that deny the annulment.

In a sentence made public in early February, the CC declared the ruling that found the sixteen army soldiers guilty null on technicalities. However, on February 10, the CC allegedly issued a resolution that the testimonies of principle witnesses remained valid and that the accusation of nullification was based on a misunderstanding of the February sentence by one of the defendants. The resolution has not yet been confirmed by the CC, and the one journalist who reported on the resolution has not been able to back up his story.

The case against the sixteen army officials, undertaken by the First Criminal Court of San Benito, Petén, began in 1994, when relatives of the victims managed to obtain an order to exhume the remains of their family members from the well the soldiers had thrown the bodies into after the massacre.

These exhumations, because they were conducted before the National Reconciliation Law was passed, are the only proceedings allegedly not annulled by the CC.

The key evidence the CC has possibly annulled includes the detailed testimonies of two military specialists from the Kaibil unit who came forward, full of remorse, and admitted to participating in the massacre. Additional evidence is the testimony of a youth who survived the massacre.

Through these confessions, the Public Prosecutor's Office obtained the names of the soldiers who participated in the massacre: Roberto Anibal Rivera Martínez, Cesar Adán Rosales Batres, Carlos Antonio Carias López, Carlos Humberto Oliva Ramírez, Reyes Colin Gualip, Bulux Vicente Alfonso, Manuel Pop Sun, Fredy Antonio Samayoa Tobar, Mardoqueo Ortiz Morales, Pedro Pimentel Rios, Daniel Martínez Méndez, Jorge Vinicio Sosa Orantes, Santos López Alonzo, Manuel Cupertino Montenegro Hernández, Gilberto Jordan, Jorge Basilio Velásquez López, and Cirilo Benjamin Caal Ac.

The Dos Erres case was unprecedented. No other case of human rights abuse perpetrated during the armed conflict had such strong testimony and evidence that implicated and named the perpetrators, and now it is without effect.

### Rights Action Office Broken Into

**2/1/05** - On the morning of January 31, personnel of Rights Action in Guatemala found that their office had been broken into and robbed. Based on an assessment of the conditions of the break-in, Rights Action concluded that the motive for the break-in was not economic but rather to steal information.

The burglar broke into the office through a window in the main office where all the information from the organization is stored. A laptop containing a large amount of data was stolen. The computer for the local area network server was disconnected, taken from the desk, and left in the middle of the floor, as if in preparation to steal it. A file box containing petty cash was removed and taken to the hall. The box had been forced open, and though it obviously contained the equivalent of approximately \$500, no money was taken. The burglar left a partially con-

sumed juice can beside the box as if to draw attention to the fact that they had reviewed the contents.

Though the burglar left the cash and six computers in the three offices, he stole a few items without value, including a keyboard, an inexpensive tape player, a box of keys, and a box of candles and dried fruit produced by campesino groups with whom Rights Action works. A key taken from the building and a footprint were found on the roof terrace suggesting the burglar's exit route.

Rights Action fears the office may have been watched since the burglar chose the only evening in several months in which no one was in the office. The burglar left a Guatemalan identification card in the office, as though it had been dropped accidentally. The break-in was reported to the Public Prosecutor's office, and the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights examined the crime scene the morning the break in was discovered. Representatives of the Human Rights Ombudsman's office also visited the scene.

Rights Action is a non-governmental organization based in the United States and Canada, with a regional office in Guatemala. Rights Action funds and supports community-based organizations in southern Mexico, Central America, Haiti, and Peru that plan and carry out their own community development projects.

### **Another Break-in at CEDEPCA**

**2/7/05** - On the morning of February 7, the offices of Education for Communication (CEDEPCA), a religious social justice organization, were broken into for the second time in three months. Five new computers were stolen. General Coordinator Judith Castañeda stated that she received a call from CEDEPCA's security provider at 5:45 AM warning that the office alarm had been activated. Castañeda arrived at the office at 6:00 AM and found police officers and private security officers waiting to enter the facility.

By 6:15, CEDEPCA program coordinators Dennis Smith, Betty Carrera, and Rafael Escobar were also present. The stolen computers had been purchased and installed less than two weeks previous to robbery.

When the CEDEPCA team inspected the premises, they found that doors to individual offices had been forced open and papers and desk items had been scattered on the floor. No money was taken, nor did the thieves take computer monitors, keyboards, speakers, printers, a photocopier, or other valuable office equipment. Castañeda tentatively calculates loss and damages

of \$15,000.

CEDEPCA also suffered a break-in on December 3, 2004, just as the office was preparing to begin a reduced holiday schedule. At that time, ten computers and \$150 in cash were stolen. As happened with the most recent break-in, the thieves chose not to take computer monitors, the photocopier, or other valuable office equipment. Those responsible for the December break-in demonstrated uncanny restraint, leaving wires and office equipment neatly arranged on desks and few signs of forced entry.

Castañeda announced that, effective immediately, she has dismissed CEDEPCA's security provider and will institute a permanent presence at the office. She also announced that she had already begun negotiating with neighbors and with the city government to install a gate with an armed guard at the entrance.

Castañeda stated: "We are confident of our mission and our ministry; we will carry on. Despite the difficult circumstances, we will begin our regular schedule of events and classes this week as planned."

Dennis Smith, who does cultural and political analysis for CEDEPCA, noted that he felt certain that the most recent crime was carried out by the same people responsible for the December break-in. "We need to consider three possible scenarios: one, that this is the work of common criminals. Many details related to the break-ins don't coincide with this option. Another possibility is that paramilitary forces are investigating CEDEPCA, perhaps because of our social justice ministries. A third option would be that highly-sophisticated local mafias are behind the break-in; they sell the stolen information and equipment to interested parties, including paramilitary forces." Smith noted that a number of human rights groups have suffered similar break-ins in recent months.

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

### **Murders of Women Skyrocket**

**2/2/05** - Thirty-six women were murdered in Guatemala in January, indicating an increase in the brutal violence against women that has wracked Guatemala in recent years. Since 2001, 1,300 women have been murdered, and each year the number has risen. According to statistics kept by the National Civil Police, in January 2005, killings of women increased by sixty-four percent over

the same month in 2004, when twenty-two women were murdered. Nonetheless, in mid-January, the Guatemalan government cut the special police unit responsible for investigating these crimes from twenty-two officers to five, saying resources were better allocated to investigating murders of men, since they outnumbered murders of women in 2004 by three to one.

Yet the murder rate of women is climbing more steeply than that of men: the National Civil Police reported that 112 men were murdered in January, compared to ninety-three last year, an increase of approximately forty-eight percent. As Organization of American States rapporteur on Women's Rights Susana Villarán noted after a September visit to Guatemala, the problem is not merely a question of numbers but an issue of the increasing brutality of the killings; more female victims than before are appearing with signs of rape, torture, and mutilation.

Last September, Villarán admonished the Guatemalan government for its lack of seriousness in investigating the murders of women, especially in the countryside. She noted that the National Civil Police had only twenty-two officers investigating femicide, all of whom were located in Guatemala City. That number has now been cut by more than seventy-five percent.

## RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

### **Murders of Youths Increased During 2004**

**2/4/05** - According to information provided by Casa Alianza in Central America, Guatemala had the highest number of murders of children and youths during 2004, with 847 killed. Next came Honduras, with 395 murders, then Nicaragua, with 163. Costa Rica had the fewest murders, with only twenty-nine, according to information provided by the organization "Covenant for Your Rights." The Guatemalan statistics include only Guatemala City, compared to those for Honduras and Nicaragua, which include the whole country.

After one year of a new government in Guatemala, the number of murders among children and youths increased from 747 in 2003 to 847 in 2004, despite several recently implemented programs. Statistics show that the 847 children and youths murdered in 2004 ranged in age from zero to twenty-two years. They died mainly from gunshots and knife wounds. Of the 847 children killed, 745 were boys and 103 were girls. The average is over two murders per day. According to Casa Alianza, "these

facts demand an urgent response to address the insecurity and violence of Guatemalan society to achieve the goals of Article 9 of the Integral Protection of Children and Teenagers Law, which states that 'all children and teenagers have the right to life.'"

## LAND RIGHTS

### **Negotiations Under Way in Land Conflicts**

**2/1/05**- The National Land Commission (Contierra) is currently negotiating 139 disputes, of which they hope to resolve in a peaceful manner in 2005.

Maríel Aguilar, director of Contierra, explained that since 2004 significant advances have been achieved concerning land conflicts in fifty-three round-table discussions. "Campesinos as well as land owners have shown their desire to resolve these conflicts in a peaceful manner," she stated.

On January 27, *Prensa Libre* published a report claiming that in sixty-eight of the 102 farms invaded, the instigators were armed. Faced with this situation Vice-President Eduardo Stein said that he would push dialogue before proceeding with eviction orders.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

### **Berger to Push for More Support as Campesinos Demand Consultation**

**2/10/05** - Guatemalan President Óscar Berger will ask the mining company, Montana Exploradora, for support in providing health care and other infrastructure to the San Marcos area where it plans to develop the Marlin gold mine.

In a meeting with company officials scheduled for February 16, Berger will ask the company to show "its good will" by paying for two hospitals, a school, and programs aimed at helping the local economy. The amount of the requested investments was not given, but it would be in addition to the 1 percent royalty the mining project will be constitutionally obliged to pay. Half of the funds raised from the royalty will be set aside for the local community. The \$120 million open-pit and underground Marlin mine is slated to produce an average of 217,000 ounces of gold and 3.3 million ounces of silver annually over ten years. The mine has a projected life of ten to fifteen years.

This dialogue occurs after a February 1 presi-

dential order that suspended three grants for mining operations until the government and civil society groups come to an agreement regarding further activity. According to Jorge García, vice-minister of Energy and Mining, the suspension of these operations was decided after the Government and the Catholic Church agreed to stop mining operations until there is a better assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of mining. García added that the Mineral Law authorizes the Ministry of Energy and Mining to grant and suspend licenses without any additional legal procedures.

From 1996 to December 1, 2004, the Ministry of Energy and Mining registered 144 licenses for mining exploration of which the present government registered nineteen. During the same time period, permission was granted for extraction in 145 cases, of which twelve cases took place during the Berger administration.

“The Spanish came here 500 years ago. They gave the people here mirrors in exchange for the gold,” said Timoteo Tojil, a resident of the largely Maya municipality of Sipacapa where mining is planned. “Now they want to take the gold and leave one percent. This is a story we know.”

### **Unions Condemns Mining Concessions**

**2/2/05** - In a session with the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Workers Union of Guatemala (UNSI TRAGUA) criticized the Guatemalan State for what they considered a violation of Article 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, declaring that the government did not carry out a mandatory consultation with the local people concerning mining operations.

The demand was presented on January 25 with the purpose of “freezing all mining and mineral extraction in the country until the local indigenous communities have been informed and consulted in areas where mining operations are to be carried out,” stated UNSI TRAGUA coordinator Julio Coj.

The article decrees that before mining concessions can be given, local populations and communities must be consulted and their opinions be taken into consideration; however, this was not done, Coj assured.

### **CAFTA Sent to Guatemalan Congress**

**2/11/05** - On January 28, the text of the Central American Free Trade Agreement, known as CAFTA, between the United States, Central America, and the Dominican was sent to Guatemala’s unicameral Congress. Through-

out the month of February members of the External Relations committee and the committee of Economy and Foreign Trade will analyze this issue. On February 4, members of Congress stated that they were interested in requesting copies of the text of the agreement to begin an official analysis. CAFTA may be ratified as by Easter according to Mariano Rayo, president of the Economic Commission.

CAFTA negotiations ended in August of 2004, but until now has only been ratified by El Salvador’s Congress. In Guatemala various social sectors have been in opposition to the agreement, because they believe that thousands of Guatemalans, will be negatively affected by the large amount of competition their products will face against US subsidized products.

Miguel Angel Sandoval from the civil society group, Mesa Global, explained that CAFTA is not well understood by congressional representatives, and being an issue that will have great influence over the lives of Guatemalans in two or three generations, its approval or passing should be submitted to a popular vote.

Campesino organizations have shown their opposition to Congress’ proposed ratification of CAFTA. The National Workers Union, comprised of some 14 thousand members has joined the cause in opposing the agreement. Their secretary general, Luis Lara, said that the text of CAFTA may have unconstitutionality that negatively affect the sovereignty of Guatemalans. A sensitive issue is the case of Guatemala’s corn market, which could be threatened by subsidies from the United States that would enter Guatemala tariff-free.

Although many civil society groups still oppose the treaty and the negative impact it will have on the health and overall well being of many of Guatemala’s poor, the treaty continues to be considered by Congress.

President Berger has affirmed that it is not necessary to ask for public opinion concerning the ratification of CAFTA. He noted that the groups in favor of a popular vote are few and represent a minority. He added that the treaty would not negatively affect Guatemala; on the contrary, if Guatemala does not accept the treaty other Central American countries will have an economic advantage.

The day of public hearings in Congress for the approval of the issue is set for February 28. In spite of the hearings, the majority of the representatives have already decided to vote in favor of CAFTA, only the blocks by the New Nation Alliance and the Guatemalan National

Revolutionary Unity (URNG) continue to maintain an opposing position. Some civil society groups allege that representatives may be paid off to vote in favor of CAFTA.

Jean Ziegler, a UN rapporteur for the Food Security on a recent visit to Guatemala reported that lack of land, insufficient salaries, water problems, scarce economic returns, racism, Free Trade Agreement risks with the United States and a lack of justice were among the most evident problems currently plaguing the country. Ziegler also remarked poverty levels as “grave” and in respect to CAFTA stated, “it will only bring more hunger to the country.”

## HEALTH RIGHTS

### Drug Test Data Protections Return

**2/2/05** - Guatemala has introduced legislation to reverse its recent repeal of laws protecting test data for drugs, and President Oscar Berger has sent Congress legislation to implement the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). A spokesman for the Office of the US Trade Representative said the US government welcomed the moves.

Some US lawmakers said they did not want to discuss CAFTA until Guatemala reversed the repeal, and the Bush Administration feels drugmakers need five years’ guaranteed data protection as an incentive to develop new products and recover research and development costs. However, those who oppose such provisions contained in many trade agreements feel they make it harder for generic versions of needed drugs to be made available for the poor in developing nations.

A few days before Guatemala took this action, eleven Democratic Members of the House of Representatives wrote to former US Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Zoellick, asking that the Bush Administration end its pressure on the country and remove this provision from CAFTA. Claiming the US request violates congressional direction under fast track, they also said the 2002 Trade Promotion Authority Act directs the USTR to uphold the 2001 World Trade Organization’s Doha Agreement which, they add, was meant to ensure intellectual property rules did not get in the way of developing countries’ ability to take “measures to protect public health...and to promote access to medicines for all.”

The letter’s signatories feel it is unclear whether

those signing CAFTA could issue a compulsory license permitting manufacture of a generic drug in a health emergency. The inclusion of such provisions in a free trade agreement with poor developing countries interferes directly with the central purpose of Doha, they said. There is no trade advantage or significant impact on global research and development spending if these countries provide test market data exclusivity, but there is potential for serious harm to those who need affordable, life-saving drugs, according to the signatories who include Ways and Means ranking member Charles Rangel, Trade Subcommittee ranking member Sander Levin, and Government Reform Committee ranking member Henry Waxman.

## JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

### CC Denies Payment to Ex-PACs

**2/8/05** - Judges of the Constitutional Court (CC) voted against the payment of former Civil Defense Patrollers (Ex-PACs), ruling it unconstitutional. Due to threats of aggression by former ex-PACs, the CC inconspicuously convened in a Guatemala City hotel. While the Constitution does will not allow direct payments, it does allow for compensation in the form of social projects, such as the building of schools, scholarships, and health stipends, among others.

Four of the seven magistrates voted against the payments. Those who were in favor of compensation were Cipriano Soto, Guillermo Ruiz Wong, and Francisco Palomo. The CC supported their decision by stating that when legislators issued decree 28-2004, which allotted payment of \$655 to each ex-PAC, they failed to include information about the source of funding for the payments.

Otto Pérez Molina, of the Patriotic Party (PP), asked the ex-PACs to take this decision in stride and abstain from taking violent measures. In addition, he asked President Óscar Berger to arrange a high level meeting to address this issue. Molina added that he thought the ruling was more political than legal and that the judges were hoping to curry favor from the human rights movement and seek re-election. This, however, seems unlikely as human rights organizations have little or no influence over the selection of CC justices.

After the CC’s resolution, Mario Tahuite, director of one of the ex-PAC groups, declared that no measures would be taken, but he urged President Berger to

keep his campaign promises to pay the ex-PACs. Some groups expressed that they would accept social projects rather than cash if necessary.

The final ruling was suspended four times because ex-PACs were protesting violently in front of the CC, and judges who had voted against the payments previously had received threats.

The REMHI report stated that ex-PACs, together with members of the military, were responsible for more than ninety percent of the 669 massacres that took place during the armed conflict.

### **Azmitia Family Receives Reparations**

**2/4/05** - In a press release published on February 3, the State of Guatemala acknowledged its responsibility to comply with international human rights standards and sought a pardon from the surviving members of the Azmitia family. Between September 19 and 22 of 1981, three members of the Azmitia family were “disappeared” by Guatemalan intelligence forces operating during General Romeo Lucas García’s administration.

Mario Federico Azmitia Dorantes was kidnapped the morning of September 19 while he was sleeping at a friend’s house in the neighborhood of El Limón. Dora Clemencia Azmitia Dorantes, three months pregnant, was kidnapped on September 21. The father of the victims, José Mario Azmitia Molina, was kidnapped on September 22 after being interviewed by Cardinal Mario Casariego, as part of his search for his children.

According to the press release, the Government agreed to an Amicable Solution through the Inter-American Human Rights Commission recognizing the State’s institutional responsibility in failing to guarantee the life, liberty, justice, and security of the victims at the time of the events and in the delay of investigations and prosecution of those responsible.

On September 19, 2002, the Guatemalan Government took the first step toward clarification of the case by re-opening investigations through the Public Prosecutor’s Office. They also honored the memory of the victims by placing a commemorative plaque in a parish in the victims’ community. A financial settlement was also reached.

### **GAM to Be Co-Plaintiff in Corozo Case**

**2/8/05** - The Mutual Support Group (GAM) requested of a Mazatenango court to be named co-plaintiff in the case of six murdered campesinos from the El Corozo farm

in January.

Six people were killed in a dispute that started on January 21 between local campesinos and the owner of the El Corozo ranch in Samayac, Suchitepéquez. Private security guards captured a twenty-two-year old campesino, Pedro Mariano Tambriz Itzep, on the ranch on January 21 as he and two teenage friends were allegedly gathering fruit without permission. His body was found on January 22 in San Andres Villa Seca in nearby Retalhuleu, with three bullet wounds, although relatives did not positively identify the body until January 28.

### **José Zamora Identifies Assailants**

**2/9/05** - José Rubén Zamora’s testimony closed the first court hearing against Eduviges Funes Velásquez and Belter Armando Álvarez Castillo who are accused of forced entry and aggravated assault against the journalist and his family. Zamora is both the president of and journalist for the daily newspaper, *El Periódico*.

At the hearing, presided over by Leonel Meza, Zamora identified Funes and Alvarez as two of the twelve individuals responsible for threatening and beating him, his wife, children, and domestic workers upon breaking into his house in Guatemala City on June 24, 2003. Zamora stated that at one point, he feared that they would kill him and his family. He confirmed that he saw Funes several times during the encounter and recognized him because of his distinct limp.

Both of the accused were members of the former Presidential High Guard (EMP). Funes abstained from making a statement, while Álvarez proclaimed his innocence against charges of forced entry, coercion, illegal detention, and aggravated assault.

### **Genocide Not Considered for Compensation**

**2/12/05** - Rosalina Tuyuc, President of the National Compensation Commission (CNR), was outraged over the government’s decision, published on February 4, to not provide compensation for victims of genocide. The CNR was not informed of the decision prior to its publication in the government’s official newspaper. This ruling will impact whole communities who suffered from the genocide, as compensation will now only be offered on an individual basis. The CNR has already registered over a quarter of a million victims, including those affected by genocide. “We need to discard all the work we completed over the past six months,” said Tuyuc.

## OTHER INFORMATION

### **Spanish Embassy Massacre Anniversary**

**2/1/05** - Equipped with crosses and mock coffins, hundreds of protesters gathered in Guatemala City to demand justice at the exact hour where twenty-five years earlier, their parents, siblings, and friends were burned to cinders in the Spanish Embassy.

Nicolasa Camajac, one of the protesters, had a three-month-old son when her husband was burned to death. She is one of many who lost loved ones that day. On December 10, 2004, the Spanish government issued an arrest warrant for Álvarez Ruiz, Guatemala's former Minister of the Interior, charging him with responsibility for the 1980 assault on the Spanish Embassy. The hunt for Alvarez Ruiz in Mexico has thus far been fruitless, amid charges that the Mexican government has made a deal to let him escape.

The protesters, including campesinos and affiliated interest groups, demanded not only justice for the atrocities caused but also effective change in the social and economic conditions that led to the 1980 occupation of the embassy in the first place.

Apart from the thirty-seven victims being honored, the protesters also remembered two youths who had been killed after having attended the victims' funerals and also four students who died after attending a protest.

### **Suspected Drug Traffickers to Be Extradited**

**2/4/05** - A Guatemalan Appeals Court denied the appeals of six suspected drug traffickers, confirming their extradition, requested by the US. The defense lawyers' appeal was an attempt to keep the accused from being tried in the US.

A criminal court will make the final decision whether to proceed with the US extradition request. The request was made in March 2004 but it was not until December that Guatemalan police arrested alleged drug traffickers Miguel Oswaldo Bolaños Acevedo, César Augusto Molina Maldonado, Ricardo Augusto Morán Molina, Humberto Molina Letona, Luis Alonso Pérez, Jorge Cordón Oliva, all of who remain incarcerated.

### **DNA Tests Affirm Cerna's Identity**

**2/3/05** - The Attorney General's office announced on February 3 that DNA testing has confirmed that the body of an unidentified man, who died from apparent hydrochloric acid poisoning, is that of a former presidential se-

curity agent.

Colonel José Raul Cerna, ex-director of Presidential High Guard (EMP) under the Portillo administration, was the focus of the Department's investigation into the alleged embezzlement of as much as \$30 million from the agency, public prosecutor Celeste Diaz said in a news release. The exact amount will not be known until ongoing audits are concluded, she said.

Cerna died last April, apparently after being poisoned with hydrochloric acid. At the time he was admitted to the hospital, however, he was not carrying any identification, and he was buried subsequently as "XX" in a public cemetery. The body was exhumed in November at the request of Cerna's family.

Diaz said her department is now investigating whether Cerna committed suicide or was murdered. Because the case is already ten months old, however, "evidence has been lost, including the traces of hydrochloric acid and the colonel's clothing," she said. In November, Cerna's girlfriend told reporters that a few weeks before he disappeared in April, the military official had mentioned being harassed and receiving threats.

Guatemalan Congresswoman Nineth Montenegro, who blew the whistle on Cerna, also asked for an investigation into his death. Montenegro said she believed that Cerna had important information about what happened to the money.

## RESOURCES

A website was launched to facilitate the process of finding "disappeared" people in Guatemala, as well as to help locate victims of illegal adoption. Individuals or organization interested in reporting or are looking for an individual should visit the website: <http://www.guatemaltecosdesaparecidos.org>

## LAST WORD

In Guatemala there are currently 943 cases involving land disputes, of which:

- 139 are related to occupied lands
- 58 are related to regularization of property
- 67 with land line disputes
- 679 concerning land rights disputes
- 53 conflicts are currently under negotiation.



The Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA, based in Washington D.C., has been on the forefront of the struggle for peace and human rights in Guatemala since it was founded in 1982. GHRC/USA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, humanitarian organization committed to monitoring, documenting and reporting on the human rights situation in Guatemala while advocating for victims of human rights violations.

Information in the Update that is not gathered directly is culled from various sources including ; the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission , Casa Alianza, Amnesty International, Associated Press, Reuters and the Guatemalan Press, including Cerigua, La Cuerda, Incidencia Democrática, Prensa Libre, La Hora, Guatemala Hoy, Siglo Veintiuno, and Patrullaje Informativo. \*Dates written before the text indicate when the incidents were reported.

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