



El Quetzal

A Quarterly Publication

Issue #8

GHRC

October 2010

‘For Women’s Right to Live’ Delegation Provides Inspiring Examples of Successful Local Women’s Leadership and Empowerment

This August, 15 women from the US participated in GHRC’s annual delegation focused on violence against women and femicide. The group brought together a diverse mix of people, including students, professors, a legislative aid, and women involved in development work and domestic violence advocacy.

In seven days, the delegation met with governmental and non-governmental offices, defenders of women’s rights, and women community leaders in three indigenous communities. They learned about the increasing levels of violence against women, including domestic abuse and femicide, and the pervasive impunity that allows abusers and murderers to avoid any repercussions for their actions. They witnessed examples of women organizing and educating their communities about women’s rights, reproductive health, and sustainable development. At the end of the week, the delegates spoke with US Ambassador Stephen McFarland concerning what



GHRC delegates visit a Maya K’iche’ women’s group in Xejuyup, Cantel, Quetzaltenango

they had seen and heard, and made recommendations for improved US support for women.

Delegations provide a unique opportunity for cross-cultural engagement and hands-on learning. For many, it is a transformative experience. August delegate Ursula Hill, a student of social work at the University of Maryland, shared her reflections of the trip with

GHRC after returning to her home in Baltimore, Maryland.

.....
August 26, 2010

A week in Baltimore has not been long enough to begin figuring out how the delegation exactly fits into my life, but I don’t want the experience to become just an isolated summer learning experience. We learned a lot about violence against women, but “Why?” and “How?” are questions we only began to answer.

Continued on Page 4

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Mayan Cultural Leader Mourned.....	2
Ex-Kaibil Sentenced in the US.....	3
Guatemalans Call for Support of People over Profits.....	6
Defenders and Land Rights Focus of IACHR.....	7
Labor Leaders Urge International Support.....	8

Voiceless Speak: A Life of Service.....	9
Community Radio Advocates Push Legislation.....	10
Asylum Program Benefits Youth.....	10
Challenges of Police Reform.....	11
The UPDATE.....	14

GHRC Mission

Founded in 1982, the Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA (GHRC) is a non-profit, nonpartisan, humanitarian organization that monitors, documents, and reports on the human rights situation in Guatemala, advocates for survivors of human rights abuses in Guatemala, and works toward positive, systemic change.

Board of Directors

Kathy Ogle
President

Christina del Castillo
Vice President

Joan Dawson
Secretary

Jack McHale
Treasurer

Yolanda Alcorta

América Calderón

Gloria Jean Garland

Amy Kunz

John Leary

Karl Wolf

Advisory Board

Kit Gage

Jennifer Harbury

Sr. Dianna Ortiz

Sr. Alice Zachmann

Raul Molina

Staff

Amanda Martin
Director

Kelsey Alford-Jones
Associate Director

Interns

Andrea Landin

Tricia Johnson

Mayan Cultural Leader Mourned around the World

On August 25, 2010, Guatemala and the international community lost a dynamic and important cultural leader and human rights defender. Leonardo Lisandro Guarcax. A Mayan Kaq'chikel teacher, cultural leader, artist, and spiritual guide, Guarcax was on his way to the school in Sololá where he served as principal, when he was kidnapped. His body was found the next day near the town of Los Encuentros, Sololá, with signs of brutal torture.

As co-founder and coordinator of the Sotz'il Jay Cultural Center, Guarcax re-energized Mayan youth, and inspired pride for indigenous culture through dance, theater, music and art. In his words: "We don't do art for art's sake; we do it to recover the dignity of our people." The Center strives to build a community on ancestral Mayan values and inspire youth to embrace and reclaim their roots. Guarcax performed traditional dances with members of Sotz'il Jay throughout Guatemala, Latin America, and even Europe, bringing depth and heart to the larger communities' often limited understanding of the Maya in today's world.

On October 3, 2010, thousands gathered in Guatemala City to pay homage to Guarcax during the second annual Festival for Life, "Your



Rosalina Tuyuc, of National Coordinator of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA), honors Lisandro Guarcax at the Festival for Life.

Heart Blossoms." The program included a range of musical performances from groups across Guatemala, including hip-hop in Kaq'chikel and Tz'utujil and an appearance by

Norwegian singer-songwriter Lars Klevstran. Festival performers mourned and expressed their outrage at the assassination of Guarcax, publicly calling for investigation and justice in the case.



Dozens of organizations from Mexico to Canada, including GHRC, placed a large ad in Guatemala's *Prensa Libre*, paying respects to his vision and work. "Lisandro," it read, "you represent the dignity and ancestral wisdom of the Mayan people. In your

name we fight for a dignified life for all Guatemalans." The ad also demanded an end to repression and violence against Mayan commu-

We don't do art for art's sake; we do it to recover the dignity of our people.

-Lisandro Guarcax

nity leaders, artists, and human rights defenders, as well as an exhaustive investigation into the murder and protection for the Guarcax family. GHRC also delivered a petition with almost 700 signatures to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Guarcax is one of many activists and community leaders in Guatemala to be attacked for his work. He was the third member of his family to be targeted; two of his cousins, who were also members of the Sotz'il Jay Cultural Center, were killed in the last 18 months. All three murders remain unsolved.

Since 2000, 115 Guatemalan human rights defenders have been murdered. In 2009 alone there were 343 aggressive attacks against defenders, the most violent year since the signing of the Peace Accords. By August, there had been 223 attacks in 2010. With an impunity rate reaching 99%, justice is rarely a reality.

Sign up on the GHRC website to receive future urgent actions.

Guatemalan ex-Kaibil Gilberto Jordan Sentenced in US

Victims of the Guatemalan genocide were brought one step closer to justice on September 16, 2010, when Gilberto Jordan, former soldier and participant in the 1982 Dos Erres massacre, was sentenced to 10 years in prison by US District Judge William Zloch. Jordan was brought to court on charges of naturalization fraud. Upon his arrest in May, he confessed to participating in the torture, rape, and murder that annihilated an entire village during the internal armed conflict.

The massacre at Dos Erres, in the region of Petén, was one of the most brutal of the internal conflict. According to witnesses and recently declassified US archives, 20 *kaibiles*, the Guatemalan Special Forces, entered the town the morning of December 6, 1982. After separating the men from the women and children, Gilberto Jordan testified, he committed the first murder by throwing a baby down the village well. He and other soldiers proceeded to interrogate and torture the men and rape the women, including many young girls. By the end of the day they had killed over 250 inhabitants who they claimed were “guerrilla sympathizers.” They threw the bodies down the well and, once that was filled, into the nearby forest. There are only two known survivors.

Gilberto Jordan is the first of many known perpetrators to be convicted of these heinous acts, though not on charges of murder or rape. Jordan moved to Boca Raton, Florida, in 1985. Eleven years later, he applied for US citizenship. According to the National Security Archives, he denied prior military participation on his application, and answered “no” to the question, “Have you ever committed a crime or offense for which you were not arrested?” A few months later he was sworn in as a US citizen.

Jordan’s arrest in May of 2010, 28 years after the massacre, came as a result of the recent efforts to identify and hold accountable war criminals residing in the US, a collaboration between the newly

formed Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section of the Department of Justice Criminal Division and the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Although immigration fraud is typically penalized with sentences of up to 6 months, exceptions are allowed for “aggravated or mitigated circumstances of any kind.”

At the hearing, Ramiro Osorio Cristales, one of the two survivors of the Dos Erres massacre, served as the prosecutor’s witness. Now 33 years old, Cristales recounted his childhood memory of the horrific events of the massacre. The defense argued that Jordan was acting under orders at the time and that since coming to the US his record has been clean. Nevertheless, Judge Zloch granted the prosecutor’s request for a ten-year sentence, reasoning that, “Anything less would be totally inadequate as just punishment for this crime.” Jordan will be deported back to Guatemala after serving his sentence.

There are currently three other former *kaibiles* linked to the case in the United States; Guatemala recently requested the extradition of one, Santos Lopez Alonzo, who was living undocumented in Hous-



Gilberto Jordan

ton, Texas. The other two, Jorge Vinicio Sosa and Pedro Pimentel Ríos, are California residents and are currently in custody.

The implications of this case have yet to be determined in Guatemala, where justice comes slowly, if at all, and prosecutors often fall prey to corruption and special interests. Investigation in the Dos Erres case began in 1994 after the bodies were exhumed; however, arrests warrants for the former *kaibiles* were not sent out for another 16 years. On September 8, 2010, the Guatemalan courts announced that three of the 17 accused would stand trial. Despite these advances, the proceedings have been under threat, as a court injunction is currently being sought for Dos Erres. Other paradigmatic cases have had similar obstacles, including the Rio Negro massacre, the Genocide case and the Bámaca case.

Although Guatemalan officials say that in Guatemala Gilberto Jordan would receive a sentence of 20 years for each person he murdered in 1982, the claim is uncertain given the pervasive culture of impunity and the powerful influence of the military. The recent ruling in South Florida, therefore, provides a much needed international precedent to confront ongoing impunity in war crimes cases. The laudable actions taken to bring Jordan to justice will hopefully spur further efforts in the struggle to confront Guatemala’s tragic recent history.

Historic Police Archives Recognized

GHRC congratulates the Historic Archives of the National Police for their recognition at the 2010 Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Awards in Washington, DC.

Velia Muralles and Gustavo Meoño received the award on behalf of the Archives and spoke about the importance of the project to recover the millions of documents abandoned at a police facility in Guatemala City. The documents contain detailed information about police activity dating back more than a century. The staff at the Archives is particularly interested in recovering documents from the worst years of the internal conflict, information which will aid in the prosecution of war crimes. Muralles returned from Washington to serve as an expert witness in the case of the forced disappearance of Fernando Garcia.

'For Women's Right to Live': A Delegate's Reflection

Continued from Page 1

Women in Guatemala are dying because many don't know that abuse doesn't have to be part of a relationship, because they aren't free to get the same education as men, because their bodies have been used as a weapon of war, because of a long legacy of inequality and exploitation.

In 2008 the Guatemalan Congress approved the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women, which has provisions to protect women and girls. The law has opened avenues for domestic violence convictions and government support of women's shelters (CAIMUs). And while the law has yet to be fully implemented and the social barriers to eliminating violence against women are huge, we met women who are working on a local, national, and international level to fight for women's rights. These women will continue to inspire me, and I want to introduce four of them to you:

Norma Cruz directs the Fundación Sobrevivientes (Survivors Foundation) in Guatemala City. The Foundation provides women with a psychologist, social worker, doctor, and lawyer as they recover from extreme violence and prosecute cases against their attackers. Norma founded Sobrevivientes because of her personal experience; as she confronted the physical and sexual abuse her then husband had inflicted on her daughter, she found that there were no organizations supporting women in her situation. Norma now serves women recovering from violence and works on other related human rights issues. One of the women Norma was working with while we were there was recovering from reconstructive surgery of her face, which had been cut off by her partner. The Foundation has earned an incredible success rate in prosecutions, and because of this, Norma receives death threats for her work.

Juanita López, a 28 year-old Mayan Mam woman from San Martín Sacatepéquez

(outside of Xela) is a vibrant leader; she also struck me because of the differences in our lives despite our similar age. Juanita was married off when she was 13 years old, and by age 18 had three children. At that point she decided she would divorce her husband. She began organizing the women in her community around the construction of a community *pila* (sink for washing clothes and dishes) that would be a source of water even during the dry season. The sink is also a place for women to meet and talk. Juanita says she wants to be a social worker; she may not have the degree, but she definitely already is one. While we were at her house with her women's group, we watched a movie she made about her life, the sink, and reconciliation with her father. Seeing her father apologize on video for his role in

One woman said that until recently, women were only allowed to leave the home for four reasons: getting water, collecting firewood, grinding corn, or washing. A freedom they've earned from organizing is a freedom I have taken for granted since I could walk - the ability to leave the house.

her oppression was incredible and hopeful.

Lorena Cabnal, a Xinka woman with AMISMAXAJ in Santa María Xalapán, Jalapa, has worked to bring women from across the Xinka state together. They



Lorena Cabnal, her husband, and their child (far left), stand with members of AMISMAXAJ, a Xinka women's group.

started meeting under the guise of making paper flowers for the Days of the Dead and began to talk about their rights as women, and the connection of women's rights and land and environmental rights as they watched their land being taken over by mining. One woman said that until recently, women were only allowed to leave the home for four reasons: getting water, collecting firewood, grinding corn, or washing. A freedom they've earned from organizing is a freedom I have taken for granted since I could walk - the ability to leave the house. Lorena's husband is also an amazing example of equality. He served us a snack, lunch, and did the dishes while we were meeting with the women's group. I asked his mother, who is part of the group, "how do you raise men to value equality in a society that's so machista?" "You start when they're young," she replied.

Sandra Morán, who runs Casa Artesana and is the director of the Women's Sector, is so amazing that I wanted to bring her home with me. She's fiery and tells it like it is, while also being down to earth. I probably like her because, among other things, she talked about the Guatemalan prison system. She teaches art, theater, music, and writing to women in

Continued on Page 5

Delegation

Continued from Page 1

jail, and helps find family members to care for the children while their mothers are detained. Casa Artesana is a beautiful, safe space for women and gays and lesbians in the center of Guatemala City. We walked by the space earlier, and passing the bright mural on the outside, I was drawn to it before I even knew we would spend an evening there. The murals inside were painted by women in jail and children of the disappeared. Both Sandra and Casa Artesana bring you in warmly and, simultaneously, make sure you don't forget that there's a harsh reality outside for everyone in Guatemala.

Alice Paul said, "The movement is sort of a mosaic. Each of us puts in one little stone, and then you get a great mosaic at the end." On the delegation, I saw big pieces of that global mosaic.

Every evening of the delegation I was overwhelmed and enraged having heard some of the stories behind the statistics, grateful for the trust of the women who shared with us, and frustrated to be complicit and privileged as a US citizen. Overall, though, these Guatemalan women left me inspired, even within the context of extreme violence; hopefully I have shared some of the light and hope they gave to our group. The women's movement in Guatemala is truly made up of women of all different backgrounds.

Alice Paul said, "The movement is sort of a mosaic. Each of us puts in one little stone, and then you get a great mosaic at the end." On the delegation, I saw big pieces of that global mosaic. As delegates, we left Guatemala with ideas about what we could do to bring the women's stories home and stay involved in our everyday lives. By sharing my experience, I hope it will ripple out among others who can then put in their "little stone."

GHRC Delegates Urge Support for the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)

The delegation experience truly begins when the delegates return home to inform their friends, family, and community of their personal experiences in Guatemala. On the last day of the delegation, a brainstorm session generates ideas for return delegate actions. Each participant lists a minimum of three activities that s/he will take upon return to their community. GHRC staff follows up with delegates on a regular basis; the vast majority of delegates complete their three actions and then some!

Delegations foster sustainable actions, campaign support, and international solidarity. Return delegate actions include everything from hosting a tortilla-making party complete with trip report, to lobbying on Capitol Hill for policies that support women's rights. One delegate is teaching a class on violence against women in Guatemala to International Affairs students in New Jersey, and is also participating as a panelist in a conference on violence against women and human rights. Another delegate presented to a youth group at her Catholic church in Duxbury, MA, and will present with another delegate to a women's group at Boston College.

On September 21, eleven delegates from the August delegation met in Washington, DC to lobby for I-VAWA, a bill that creates a comprehensive, integrated approach to addressing violence, and places women at the center of US foreign policy. The bill supports measures to prevent violence, protect survivors, and bring perpetrators to justice. It contains best practice provisions for preventing and responding to violence against women during times of peace and times of conflict. Furthermore, the bill recognizes the broader importance of supporting women: when women and girls are empowered, families and communities thrive.

GHRC delegates met with eleven Congressional and Senate offices from Virginia, Connecticut, Louisiana, South Carolina and California. Three of the offices with whom we met became co-sponsors of the bill!

Then, in mid-October, the Guatemala Human Rights Commission was invited to speak about violence against women in Guatemala on the Latino Media Collective program on WPFW 89.3FM. The four participants - including a delegate from our August 2010 delegation to Guatemala and a Guatemalan survivor of domestic violence - discussed the historical, political, and societal issues that Guatemalan women face, and how I-VAWA could contribute to positive change.

On the West Coast, delegates from 2009 and 2010 also remain active and involved in educating their communities. At the end of September 2010, two delegates hosted GHRC director Amanda Martin for presentations at San Diego City College and California State University San Marcos.

GHRC has joined with a large coalition of organizations— led by Women Thrive Worldwide, the Family Violence Prevention Fund, and Amnesty International— in making a final push to get I-VAWA passed by December 10, 2010.

Join the movement: call your Representative and Senators today and ask them to pass I-VAWA by December 10, 2010.

Guatemalans Call for Prioritizing People over Profits

Multinational Oil Company Perenco Granted Expanded Drilling Rights in Petén

In spite of fierce opposition, President Colom granted an expansion of drilling rights to the French company Perenco at the Xan oil field on July 25, 2010. Guatemalan civil society organization and human rights advocates called the move a “devastating measure against the biodiversity of Laguna del Tigre’s protected area.” Furthermore, they stressed, the “expanded contract will initiate a new phase of expulsion and violence against these 37 communities where 35,000 people have lived for more than twenty years.”¹

Historically, the Petén has had a low population density, and has maintained a rich cultural history and natural beauty. Beginning in the 1970s, it was colonized as part of a political project to turn the region into the “breadbasket of Central America,” and also used to resettle people displaced in the internal conflict or pushed from land on the south coast taken over by agribusiness.

Those settled in the Petén are some of the most impoverished and marginalized peoples in the nation. As the natural re-

of his campaign to “protect” the Petén. He announced on September 15, 2010 that the army would occupy the Laguna del Tigre National Park to “recover” park land and expel drug traffickers. “Good-bye narcos and their cattle” he announced. “I don’t want to see a single head of cattle, or I will cut it up and distribute it to the poor.”³ He also plans to open six military outposts to combat drug trafficking and illegal land use in the park, which will be funded by profits from oil extraction.

While drug trafficking poses a real threat



Left: Students of the National University of San Carlos protest in Petén.

Right: Protesters gather in Guatemala City to say: “No more oil exploitation.”

The potential damage caused by the renewal and expansion of drilling rights in the region was of such concern that German lawmakers proposed a multi-million dollar fund to offset the profits the government would have made from oil extraction. Colom, however, dismissed the offer, instead granting Perenco a 15-year license for oil exploration and extraction.

Nestled in Guatemala’s Mayan Biosphere Reserve, an area of extraordinary biodiversity which contains the second largest wetland region in Latin America, Xan is the largest oil field in Guatemala, and provides 90% of the nation’s oil production.² A third of the 9,953 hectare extension of the contract is located within the Laguna del Tigre biotope. To date, at least 47 oil wells have been drilled, many considered illegal due to their location on land designated as a National Park.

sources available in the Petén become increasingly sought after, communities have suffered repeated forced evictions and the plundering of cultural artifacts. The exploitation of vast extensions of land for monoculture crops such as African Palm have also begun to drastically change the landscape. Further development is planned, including extractive mining and hydroelectric projects and a large highway that will connect the Petén to other areas in the Northern Development Zone.

The lack of rule of law, strategic location, and available land made the Petén a perfect place for drug cartels to operate. The cartels have been linked to illegal logging for cattle grazing and the Colom administration has made this problem the focus

to the stability and health of local communities, many see the government’s rhetoric as simply a justification to remilitarize the region for the protection of economic interests. The Human Rights Convergence, a coalition of organizations, denounced Colom’s plans, saying militarization has resulted in the “forced displacement of communities, violence, plundering, aggression against citizens, [and the] turning over state lands to foreign interests.” The Convergence blamed President Colom for prioritizing profits over the rights of Guatemalan people and the environment, reminding him that the “state’s duty is to protect and support the life and interests of the population.”

¹ “La Convergencia por los Derechos Humanos apoya a las comunidades del Peten ante la amenaza de desalojo,” 10 September 2010.

² “Guatemala renews Perenco’s contract for the Xan oil field.” *energy-pedia news* 25 July 2010, Web.

³ “Militares tomarán Laguna del Tigre.” *Prensa Libre* 21 August 2010, Web.

Attacks on Defenders and Land Rights Dominate IACHR Hearings

At the 140th session of hearings of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, DC, Guatemalans presented cases focusing on indigenous land rights, the impacts of extractive industries on the environment and communities, and the situation of human rights defenders.

Protective Measures for 18 Communities affected by the Marlin Mine

Community leaders from Sipakapa and San Miguel Ixtahuacán brought a case against the Guatemala government for failing to implement the protective measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission (IACHR) in May 2010. The measures included the suspension of activities at the mine and the implementation of actions to prevent environmental pollution until a final decision is made on whether to close the mine completely.

Colom has hesitated to comply, asking for his Ministers of the Environment and of Energy and Mines to gather more information. After multiple environmental impact studies, the government, as it stated to the Commission, has not come to the conclusion that the mine is causing water contamination. (Though two weeks before the hearing, the Environmental Minister opened a criminal suit against the mining company for water pollution.)

The hearing itself was less than successful. The Commissioners remained confused about the lack of communication between the government and the communities, and one of the community members was cut off due to lack of time before giving her testimony. It is unclear how the case will move forward. Meanwhile, Goldcorp continues to extract gold from the mine.

Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders

Claudia Samayoa of the Guatemala Human Rights Defenders Unit organized a thematic hearing with human rights defenders from Panama to Mexico to present the Commission with new patterns of

threats against defenders developing across the region. The primary focus was on the criminalization of defenders and the use of anti-terrorism and public safety laws to press charges against leaders engaged in peaceful protest. Hundreds of defenders in Guatemala alone have been victims of long legal battles – or jail time – due to fabricated charges and the unjust application of the law.

In an effort to increase awareness on the issue outside the IACHR, and promote regional strategies for the protection of criminalized defenders, the coalition of human rights leaders also met with US Congressional and Senate offices, as well as solidarity organizations.

Environmentalists in Mesoamerica

Another thematic hearing focused on the situation of environmentalists in Mesoamerica. A coalition of anti-mining activists, including a community leader from near the Marlin mine in San Marcos, Guatemala, presented the disastrous impacts of extractive industries on the environment and communities. The petitioners recommended that states strengthen mechanisms to protect environmental defenders, implement prior consultations with communities, and strengthen legal protections of environmental and social impacts of the mining sector. The coalition highlighted three specific projects in Guatemala: the Marlin mine in San Marcos, the Cerro Blanco mine in Jutiapa – both owned by Canadian mining company Goldcorp – and the Guatemala Nickel Company mine in El Estor, Izabal.

Legal Obstacles for the Recognition of Indigenous Lands in Guatemala

Lawyer Carlos Pop presented the Commission with the legal obstacles for the recognition and titling of indigenous lands in Guatemala. The Guatemalan government has, in many cases, neglected to legally recognize indigenous territories, has appropriated indigenous lands, and is complicit in the eviction of native populations by non-indigenous proprietors.

Rio Negro Massacre

In a private hearing, representatives of the community of Rio Negro met with the IACHR to discuss the next steps for the case. The petitioners, Carlos Chen and Juan de Dios, were pleased with the outcome of the hearing, and have received word that the case will be sent to the Inter-American Court in the next six months. The case includes multiple massacres carried out in and around Rio Negro in Baja Verapaz, in which hundreds of men, women, and children were brutally murdered.

IACHR Conclusions

In the IACHR's press release after the hearings, the Commission expressed its concern over "structural human rights problems that exist in the region," and highlighted obstacles to the success of the hearings, stating: "the Inter-American Commission deplores the situations that arose in 2010 in which individuals who attended IACHR hearings have been victims of actions—at times on the part of government authorities—to discredit them in their countries."

Multiple petitioners were not able to attend hearings because they were not granted visas, and a hearing on the situation of women in Haiti was canceled for this reason. The Commission insisted that "it is essential that the government of the United States grant the respective visas."

The Inter-American Commission operates under the Organization of American States. Judges from across the western hemisphere hear cases twice a year and can issue precautionary measures, such as in the case of the Marlin Mine. While there is little enforcement mechanism for the rulings emitted by the IACHR, cases often are resolved through friendly agreements between the petitioners and their government, or, in especially egregious cases, can be sent to the Inter-American Court located in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Labor Leaders Urge International Support

Representatives of a large coalition of Guatemalan labor unions met with the Departments of Labor and State in early October in Washington, DC to stress the urgency of addressing labor violations in Guatemala. The two delegates from Guatemala, Francisco Mendoza and Mirna Nij, represent the Mario Lopez Larrave Foundation (FMLL), a union training center that provides solidarity and support to a diverse cross-section of Guatemala's organized labor movement. The FMLL has been working to advance the labor complaint case filed under the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA).

The meeting follows an historic move by the US government to investigate the country's egregious and pervasive labor violations. On July 30, 2010, the US Trade Representative and Department of Labor announced that the US had requested official consultations with the Guatemalan government. This is the first time the US has brought a case against a trade partner.

Two years prior, the AFL-CIO and six Guatemalan unions filed a complaint under Chapter 16 of DR-CAFTA, stating "serious and repeated failures by the Government of Guatemala to effectively enforce its own labor laws." The complaint included five individual cases of egregious labor violations. The Department of Labor has now made three visits to Guatemala

to investigate the cases, but unions have seen frustratingly little concrete progress.

According to Jeff Vogt, Deputy Director of the International Department of the AFL-CIO, the US government (USG) has no set timeline for moving the case forward. "The 60-day minimum period for cooperative consultations under the trade agreement has concluded," he explained. "The US is now able to proceed to the next step, the convening of an FTA Commission, to attempt to resolve the Guatemalan government's lack of enforcement of its own labor laws. But there is no deadline by which the USG must make this decision. However, we remain reasonably confident that the USG will proceed soon to the next stage of dispute settlement."

Workplace abuse and labor violations in Guatemala are pervasive, and have gotten worse since the passage of DR-CAFTA. Union members are under constant attack from employers and a complicit government. Workers wanting to unionize are frequently threatened, particularly in the industrial and *maquila* industry, agro-export businesses, and the financial sector. Union leaders in the public sector are blacklisted for their participation, and thus unable to find another job if fired.

Mirna Nij, a leader of the Committee of Rural and Urban workers (CTC), a union

representing the informal sector and one of the solidarity organizations under FMLL, knows firsthand the difficulty of forming a union (see inset). "It is extremely dangerous to organize, and businesses use psychological pressure and illegal methods to impede union organizing and create an environment of fear among workers," she explained.

The FMLL has been working to unify and strengthen the labor movement, and is now comprised of nine different unions representing workers in multitude of sectors: rural and farm workers, health, food and beverage industry, banking and education, among others. Still, the difficult and dangerous conditions facing organized labor have created a fractured and struggling labor sector. Today, only 2.4% of the workforce is formally organized, the vast majority (75-85%) in the informal sector. The FMLL estimates that there are 800 active unions, yet only 23 official labor agreements are registered at the Labor Ministry, none of which, apparently, is currently valid. Additional bilateral agreements exist between unions and employers, but have likewise done little to improve labor standards.

For unionized workers in Guatemala, the threat of international arbitration has not yet translated into improved working conditions for unions. The CAFTA complaint process will be an important test of the enforcement mechanisms of the trade agreement. But with a focus limited to "threats of violence," it does not include cases of physical violence or assassinations of labor leaders. Meanwhile, since the passage of DR-CAFTA in 2006, Guatemala has become the second most dangerous country in Latin America for trade unionists; 43 leaders have been assassinated in the last five years, 16 in 2009 alone. The international community must continue to assert pressure on the Guatemalan government – and businesses operating in Guatemala – to demand an end to the abuse and murder of Guatemalan workers.

Mirna Nij: A Labor Leader Breaking Gender Boundaries

Mirna Nij works in the informal sector. She became part of the Committee of Rural and Urban workers (CTC), which includes street vendors such as those that sell flowers in cemeteries, hotdogs in Guatemala City's central plaza, or DVDs at the once bustling informal market on 6th Avenue. Mirna also became involved with the FMLL, where she learned most of what she knows about being a labor leader. Despite facing gender discrimination from both inside and outside the movement, she is now a leader of the CTC and serves as the only woman on the board of the FMLL.

In 2004, she was detained along with 16 others when the military and riot police came to disperse street vendors on a traditionally busy market day. She was beaten, while pregnant, in front of her children, and held in jail for 11 days on charges of being a terrorist. This experience empowered Mirna and strengthened her resolve to keep fighting for her rights. "My first victory," she explained, "was in my house, with my husband. When I was taken prisoner, my husband realized that I did what I had to do. Now I have an ally in the house, and he takes care of the children when I have activities and trips."

Voiceless Speak: A Life of Service Continues

Jerónimo Camposeco, a 2010 Voiceless Speak Grant recipient, reflects on his work as an activist. Each year, GHRC awards the Voiceless Speak Grant to Guatemalans in the US who are engaged in human rights work.

I am from Jacaltenango, a village on the slopes of the Cuchumatán Mountains in northwestern Guatemala. We Jacaltecas speak Maya Jakalteko (Popti') and are traditional corn growers.

I was able to go to school, thanks to the Maryknoll missionaries, and graduated as a school teacher. This was something unusual for youth in my town. I became a teacher at the Parochial School in San Miguel Acatán, a Catholic school sponsored by Maryknoll Nuns for Mayan children who only spoke Akatec.

In 1967, I got a job at the National Indian Institute in Guatemala City. There, I began to understand the reality of Mayan peoples across Guatemala. I was a researcher doing socio-anthropological studies in Mayan communities and published frequently in the magazine *Guatemala Indígena*. I also took part in community development work and promoted awareness about the causes of poverty, discrimination, and deprivation. This was something I understood well because of my childhood experience as a Jacalteca Mayan and from my time as a teacher in San Miguel Acatán. In my frequent visits to indigenous communities I spoke about equality and everyone's right to a better life.

In the 1970s, a group of educated indigenous people, including myself, started a committee of Mayan people called *Patinamit* in Kaqchikel, which means "to our community." We believed that the way to change the status quo was to organize ourselves, and we helped fellow Mayans with legal, economic, social, and cultural matters. We also made international connections with indigenous groups from Mexico and the United States. I collaborated with the group White Roots of Peace, founded by the Mohawk Nation in

upstate New York, and traveled to the United States and Canada to give lectures at universities about indigenous philosophies, self-determination, and culture. We also brought live performances of indigenous dances and music.

In the mid- to late 70s, *Patinamit* started to assist in the formation of farming coop-

In my frequent visits to indigenous communities I spoke about equality and everyone's right to a better life.

eratives. These cooperatives soon began to be attacked by unknown armed men. In April 1976, after lands were stolen from 22 Indian families in Uspantán, Q'uiché by the San Francisco Cotzal Agricultural Company, we organized ourselves in a massive demonstration in front of the Congress. We demanded the government take action to return the lands. We also asked the government to free indigenous farm workers who were being held prisoners in Santa Cruz del Q'uiché.

Many of my colleagues in the movement were abducted and assassinated. Nehemías Cumes of San Juan Comalapa was taken from his home town by armed men with rifles and machine guns. He has not been seen since. Two colleagues, Roque Salazar and Antonio Mux Cumez, were abducted by many armed men on October 11, 1980. Another colleague Francisco Sisimit was found stabbed to death in his car on the highway in May 1980. The general secretary of our Committee, Joselino Xoyon, who was also elected mayor of Chimaltenango, was killed with machine guns by armed men in Chimaltenango on October 14, 1980. My cousin Nazario Camposeco was a university student. One evening, when he was on his way to the University of San Carlos, he was intercepted by armed men and taken away. His dead body appeared in a sack on the edge

of Calzada Roosevelt in Guatemala City. One of my close friends was Kai Yutah Clouds, a Mohawk Indian who worked with me on organic farming cooperatives in Kaqchikel villages. He was sponsored by the North American Indian group Four Arrows and funded by Quakers. He was kidnapped by armed men in plain clothes in front of hundreds of witnesses at the park in Chimaltenango. Later, his dead body appeared severely tortured on the streets of Antigua, Guatemala.

After that, his murderers began looking for me. I was advised by the American Embassy to leave the area to look for safety. The group Four Arrows helped me to flee and gave me sanctuary in Pennsylvania; then I applied for political asylum which was granted due the persecution I suffered in Guatemala.

I moved to Florida and have continued to assist my fellow Guatemalans and my Mayan brothers and sisters who came as refugees of the military repression in Guatemala in the decade of the 80s. I work with a coalition of Guatemalan organizations from across the country to end the abuses of Guatemalan immigrants,



Jerónimo lends his expertise to El Sol, in Jupiter, Florida.

push for immigration reform, and educate people about the economic and cultural contributions of the immigrant community. I also work with detainees to obtain legal support and connect them with their families. The El Sol Community Resource Center in Jupiter, Florida opened its doors in 2006 to provide language and occupational training, counseling, health education, and legal services to the Latino population. I am now one of many dedicated volunteers that helps El Sol serve thousands of local clients.

Community Radio Advocates Continue to Push Legislation

On October 12, 2010, Guatemalans throughout the country demonstrated for indigenous rights. As part of this movement, community radio supporters marched to the presidential palace to pressure Congress to approve Initiative 4087, the bill that would legalize hundreds of radio stations, many of which act as the sole source of information for Guatemalans around the country.

Although the Peace Accords allow for local broadcasts, corporate interests have blocked the government from institutionalizing them and instead local stations were frequently raided and closed down by the police. In the midst of the October marches, Alberto Recinos and Marcelino Moscut, advocates of Initiative 4087, along with Rigoberta Menchú, met with the President and Vice President of Congress to push for the bill's passage. Although the meeting was a promising

sign, getting the bill on the Congressional agenda has been delayed for years and a date has still not been set.

Meanwhile, the radio stations continue their important work at the community level. Local stations have a strong connection to the community and its concerns. Cultural Survival, an advocacy organization that partners with many such stations in Guatemala, stresses the importance of a thriving local media. "The foundation of any democracy is an informed citizenry. In Guatemala, community radio is the best tool to provide rural, Indigenous Guatemalans with the news and information that they need. The country's 205 community radio stations, which broadcast locally in Spanish and Mayan languages, provide a crucial venue for educational programs, local and national news, preventative health care, and emergency relief."



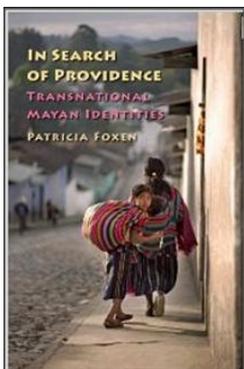
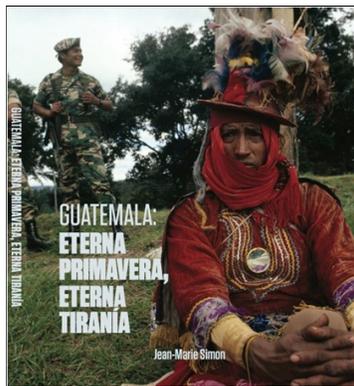
A young woman broadcasts a community radio program in Sumpango, Sacatepéquez.

The passage of Initiative 4087 and the resulting legalization of local stations is necessary for this work to continue without persecution.

Send a letter urging the government to legalize community radio at www.culturalsurvival.org/take-action/guatemala.

Authors Present New Books

This September, the seminal photojournalistic work on Guatemala's internal conflict was published in Spanish, the first time since its release in 1988 that the text will be accessible for Guatemalans. *Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny*, by Jean-Marie Simon, is a powerful book of photographs and writings documenting the war in the early 1980's. The Spanish version will be sold in Guatemala at a reduced price, and an edited version will be provided free for use in schools.



GHRC co-hosted an event with Jean-Marie Simon to celebrate the release of the new edition. Also present was anthropologist and author Patricia Foxen. Her new book, *In Search of Providence: Transnational Mayan Identities*, provides an insightful look at the Guatemalan conflict, and its complex and long-term impacts on Mayan communities, identity, and migration both in Guatemala and Providence, Rhode Island.

Asylum Program Benefits Guatemalan Youth

For many years, GHRC has provided affidavits and testimony for Guatemalans seeking asylum in the United States. Prior to 1996, applicants sought refuge from political persecution and state forces during the internal conflict. Today, Guatemalans are increasingly seeking asylum due to threats of violence from gangs, or because of situations of domestic violence.

GHRC supported the case of Lesly Perdomo with documentation of the severe violence that affects women in Guatemala. Her case suddenly received a lot of attention, both nationally and internationally, when the 9th District Court ordered the lower courts to reconsider asylum based on gender. If Perdomo receives asylum, the case would set a new precedent for expanding asylum eligibility to women as members of a "particular social group."

Another recent case of a gang-involved youth had a positive outcome, thanks to the support of GHRC's director Amanda Martin. The youth's lawyer recently contacted GHRC: "Hello Amanda, I don't know if you remember me, but you provided expert testimony for a pro bono asylum case involving a kid who left Guatemala because he was being harassed for refusing to join the gangs. I just want to say, thank you. Your help and testimony were invaluable. We just found out this week that he has been granted asylum. I didn't think it was possible given the current trend against granting asylum to gang refusers. But I'm convinced your testimony really did it! Thank you again."

Who is Providing Citizen Security? The Challenges of Police Reform

This year Guatemala will once again meet or surpass record levels of violence, assassinations, and sexual assault. In January, headlines will again pronounce that average levels of violent crime have *increased* since the signing of the Peace Accords 15 years ago, not the opposite, and that people feel *less safe* than during the internal conflict.

While the violence stems from a complex combination of historical, economic and social factors, the deteriorating situation begs for law enforcement, and its absence has put a critical spotlight on the institution charged with maintaining citizen security, investigating crimes, and detaining perpetrators: the National Civilian Police, or PNC. Not only has the police failed to carry out its duties, but in fact a large portion of the force has been involved in precisely the problems it is responsible for confronting: corruption, extortion, rape, theft, assassinations, and organized crime.

This irony poses a difficult problem for a country that desperately needs competent citizen policing. So too for the international community, which has been working to train and equip the PNC to help confront organized crime and narco-trafficking. President Colom has made police reform a focus of his administration, and this year human rights leader Helen Mack was appointed as Presidential Commissioner for Police Reform. Yet so far, efforts have been diluted, challenged and dismissed by political interests, entrenched organized crime, and a citizenry that simply does not trust the police.

Internal Challenges for the PNC

As part of the negotiation of the Peace Accords, Guatemala hoped to severely diminish its armed forces, and rely on the police to keep the streets safe. The PNC was supposed to be a fresh start for civilian law enforcement in Guatemala. Yet

from the start, the PNC never truly distanced itself from illegal and clandestine networks. With minimal retraining, 11,000 of the original 19,000 officers were simply “recycled” from the old National Police (PN), which during the internal conflict had played an active role in forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, as well as other operations overseen by the military.



Although the number of PNC agents was supposed to steadily increase, in 2010 there are only 23,000 active police officers to patrol a country of 14 million. While international standards recommend one police for every 365 civilians, Guatemala has one for every 1,000. At any one time only six thousand are on duty, the majority in Guatemala City. Much of the country is left with little police presence; fourteen municipalities – if not more – have no police station at all.

Not only are they understaffed, but police are undertrained and underpaid. Police must only complete middle school to be eligible, and the six-month police training program seems minimal considering the scope and multitude of problems they confront. Unlike its neighbors, Guatemala does not have a professional training academy for professional officers. This year, the average monthly salary of a police officer increased to Q3,750 (\$470), including bonuses. This is more than twice the minimum wage, but still not a dignified wage for a dangerous and demanding job.

The conditions that police work under can

partly explain the high levels of petty corruption. Accommodations for police on the job are abysmal, and many police stations lack basic amenities such as electricity, much less working technology. “[Prison] inmates live better than the police,” Mack has lamented.

Furthermore, police work in a hierarchical, stressful environment with little assurance of personal safety. It is not uncommon for police to use cardboard vests for protection for lack of bulletproof vests. Officers must often pay for their own gasoline when responding to calls, and will extort an unlucky passer-by rather than pay out of pocket. In many cases, they simply choose not to respond.

Along with a lack of professionalism and inadequate training, Mack cites a multitude of additional challenges confronting the PNC: weak coordination, lack of good leadership, poor resource management, and lack of an evaluation or vetting system for officers. The institution itself suffers from a vertical and authoritarian culture, she says, and a lack of strategic planning. Each successive administration has created a new plan for national security, disrupting any stability and long-term prospects for police reform.²

The leadership of the PNC has set a chilling precedent of involvement in illegal activity and organized crime. Colom has appointed five different directors of the PNC and the Interior Ministry (or MP, which oversees the PNC) during his administration alone, a list which reads like a criminal most-wanted list:

- Porfirio Pérez Paniagua, director of the PNC from June 2009-August 2009, was arrested on charges of theft of US \$300,000 and 350 kilos of cocaine; he was found to be the head of a large organized crime network while acting as director.
- Baltazar Gomez Barrios, director of

¹ “Mil 240 policías cuidan a 191 personalidades.” *Prensa Libre* 8 November 2010, Web.

² Mack, Helen. “National Civilian Police Reform Commission of Guatemala.” *Challenges for Latin American Police Forces: The Complex and Changing Environment*. Wilson Center. Washington, DC, 29 Sept. 2010.

Challenges of Police Reform

Continued from Page 11

the PNC from August 2009 to March 2010, was accused of participating in a clandestine corruption network within the PNC linked to a drug cartel.

- Salvador Gándara only served as Interior Minister for seven months, between January 2009 and July 2009. He has numerous charges against him, including abuse of authority, illegal detentions, money laundering, threats, and forced disappearances. He was also charged with bribing a witness in the Rosenberg case.
- Raul Velasquez, who served as Interior Minister from July 2009 to March 2010, is the most recent head of the MP to be dismissed on charges of corruption. He was involved in the embezzlement of close to US \$5 million when he signed a multi-million dollar contract to provide gasoline to the PNC. The company that was supposed to purchase the gas, however, was a front, and the money was laundered through international banks. Police, who had been given company coupons, were unable to purchase gas for their vehicles, which finally resulted in police in five departments being stranded for multiple days.
- The directors of the PNC and MP from 2004-2008, Erwin Sperison and Carlos Vielmann respectively, are now both being investigated for their involvement in a criminal network that specialized in the extrajudicial killings of prison inmates in 2005 and 2006.

Each year thousands of official complaints are filed against police officers with the Public Prosecutor's Office for failure to take a report, physical abuse and rape, among other charges, and many more crimes go unreported. A recent report by Amnesty International documents numerous cases of police involvement in extrajudicial killings.

That the government is taking steps to hold the PNC leadership accountable for

their crimes is surely a positive step; but not surprisingly, the PNC continues to suffer from a crisis of credibility. Unfortunately, the alternatives available for providing citizen security and addressing crime are no better.



Snapshots of police facilities. Top row: PNC Academy. Bottom row: Police Inspector General (PPT on Police Reform, www.fundesa.org.gt)

The Military Steps In

With a budget five times smaller than the military for two thirds more personnel, it is no surprise that the PNC is constantly unable to meet the challenges of community policing.

The military has been repeatedly employed to “ensure citizen security” within Guatemala’s borders. Colom has continued the use of combined forces, in which the military accompany police on their rounds and assist in police duties, in order to dissuade potential delinquent acts and provide increased security to the population. The army has also stepped in to support the police in combating drug trafficking. For example, at the beginning of November 2010, Colom sent 250 specially trained soldiers to Laguna del Tigre National Park in the Petén, saying the forces will monitor drug trafficking and protect natural resources and the archaeological sites in the reserve.

Prolonged military-police partnerships to provide citizen security are not new. But, according to the constitution, they fall outside the legal bounds of the armed

forces. The constitution defines the army as an institution that maintains the independence, sovereignty, and integrity of Guatemalan territory. Congressional Decree 40-2000 states that the armed forces can only act “exceptionally and for the most brief period possible” to restore order in cases when the “PNC is overwhelmed or survival of the State is in danger.”

While human rights organizations criticize this policy, it has become the norm despite its illegality. The military enjoys a healthier budget, better trained personnel, and its leadership hasn’t yet had to face charges for the vast crimes against humanity committed during the war. As a result, many Guatemalans, urban populations in particular, see the military as less corruptible, stricter with criminals, and more suited to provide security.

Filling the Gaps: Private Security and Vigilante Justice

Meanwhile, as the State fails to provide security for its citizens, businesses and communities have begun to take justice into their own hands. Guatemalans spend an estimated \$574 million on security each year, more than twice what the government spends. The sale of arms to private citizens is barely regulated. The March 2009 Arms and Munitions Law lowered the limit of arms to three per person (down from 12) and imposed a purchase limit of 250 bullets per gun, per month. An estimated 50 million bullets are sold each year.

The private security industry is also largely un-regulated. In urban areas, particularly the capital, there has been an explosion in the number of private security guards. According to the Research and Social Studies Association (ASIES), there are 36,000 private security agents at 147 businesses officially registered with the PNC. This is just a percentage of the true number which is estimated to be between 100,000 and 150,000 – many

Continued on Page 13

Challenges of Police Reform

Continued from Page 12

more than the police and military combined.³

Since the 1950s, the business of private security has been an enticing retirement option for military personnel, as it provides both a regular income and the opportunity to remain involved in security structures. Today, however, a private security guard is most likely to be a young, uneducated man who has received the minimum of 15 days of training, and who carries a gun he barely knows how to use.⁴

In rural areas, private security is largely absent. And so are the police. Rural communities increasingly live in an environment of violence, insecurity, and impunity that, in many cases, surpasses the internal conflict. The lack of effective police presence has contributed to an underlying mistrust of law enforcement. Out of fear and desperation, communities have begun to take justice into their own hands, using violent and public lynchings to punish suspected thieves, criminals, or rapists. In some cases, the community has taken the suspect from police custody, or attempted to lynch the police if they interfere.

US Assistance

The US government has prioritized police reform as part of its effort to combat organized crime and drug trafficking in the region. Since 2000, the US has provided approximately \$70 million for the police and military in Guatemala. Starting in 2007, the Merida Initiative's funding for Guatemala focused on training and equipment for law enforcement officials and public security issues. In 2009, the Central American Regional Security Initiative, or CARSI, broke off from the Merida Initiative, and shifted the bulk of funding to institution building, rule of law, and

development programs; \$165 million has been allocated for the region, the majority through International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) and Economic Support Funds (ESF).

But where is this money going? According to the GAO's most recent report on Merida, it isn't going anywhere very fast. The report found slow disbursements of funds across the region; by September 2009 only \$2.07 million of the funds allocated to Central America had been delivered, out of \$72.8 million obligated and \$165 million appropriated. The GAO also reported difficulty tracking funding. The status of "deliverables" to the region, for example, is extremely vague: a "range of police equipment procured, estimated delivery between now [December 2009] and February 2010."⁵ What is included in this "range of police equipment" and who is receiving it is anyone's guess.

Overall, it seems, the millions of US tax dollars spent have made only a small dent in corruption and illicit behavior among police on the job; organized crime continues to flourish. Furthermore, CARSI and other US-backed regional security initiatives have been criticized for contributing to the remilitarization of citizen security.

Police Reform

Helen Mack, founder and director on the Myrna Mack Foundation, and a respected member of the human rights community, is now in charge of police reform. She aims to decrease levels of corruption within the police and provide a long-term vision for improvement.

Efforts to vet police have increased, using background checks and lie detector tests, and Colom has dismissed hundreds of officers for corruption. More often than not, however, an officer accused of a

crime will simply be transferred to a different unit. Like Mexico and other Central American countries, Guatemala finds itself dealing with the realization that if all police were vetted for corruption, very few agents would remain – and a country cannot train an entirely new force overnight.

Mack, in a recent presentation at the Woodrow Wilson Center, outlined important principles of reform. She highlighted a strong focus on prevention, as well as education on gender equality, human rights, and multiculturalism. Infrastructure must be improved, as well, so police have a dignified work environment. And police officers should be well paid to decrease corruptibility, be well equipped on the job, and have pensions.



Helen Mack

According to Mack, the PNC needs to gain the confidence of the population. But an image change, she says, requires that police work under human conditions that meet minimal labor requirements. Furthermore, she stressed, reform must not be imposed on police, but rather should involve them in the process, increasing respect for the institution and police officers' own pride in their work.

Asked about the prospects of bringing about true reform, Mack stressed the importance of congressional support. "It will not be possible if I don't have the support of [...] the political parties, because many of the needed reforms must pass through Congress. We also need the political will of the Executive, through the Ministry of the Interior, as well as the economic sector, because with no security, investors will leave."⁶

With presidential elections coming up next year, the challenges facing the police are only likely to increase.

³ Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales quoted in "Agentes de seguridad privados superan en número a agentes de la PNC." *Prensa Libre* 5 April 2010. Web.

⁴ Argueta, Otto. Interview by Marta Sandoval. *elPeriodico*, 18 April 2010. Web.

⁵ United States Government Accountability Office. *Status of Funds for the Merida Initiative*. Washington, DC, December 3, 2009.

⁶ Mack, Helen. Interview by Francisco Mauricio Martinez. *Prensa Libre*, 28 June 2010.

Human Rights *UPDATE*

July 25: President Alvaro Colom announced the renewal of a concession for oil drilling inside the Laguna del Tigre National Park [see p.6].

July 29: Hundreds affected by the Chixoy hydroelectric dam, constructed in the 1980's, began a sit-in in front of the President's house, demanding reparations for damages. According to community leader Juan de Dios Garcia, 11,000 people are negatively affected by the dam and about 7,770 acres have been flooded without permission from residents.

August 25: 72 bullet-ridden bodies were found on a ranch in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. These bodies belonged to migrants from Honduras, El Salvador, Brazil, and at least five from Guatemala who were en route to the United States. The alleged perpetrators of this crime are members of the Zetas, a powerful drug trafficking organization known for kidnapping and extortions.

September 5: Police in Los Angeles, California shot and killed a Guatemalan day laborer, Manuel Jamines. Jamines was allegedly armed and threatening police, who told him to drop his weapon. When he didn't, police shot him twice in the head. The killing sparked protests that turned violent in the primarily immigrant community of Westlake.

September 11: This date was the 20th anniversary of the assassination of Myrna Mack, a Maya/Chinese anthropologist who researched human rights violations of internally displaced populations during Guatemala's armed conflict. As a result of her outspoken criticism of the government, she was stabbed to death as she left her office in Guatemala City in 1990. Her sister founded the Myrna Mack Foundation in 1993 to fight against impunity in Guatemala.

September 17: The head of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, Sergio Morales, said he would denounce the Guatemalan State at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) for lack of attention to femicides and failure to create public policies that deal with the prevention, investigation and prosecution of femicides and order immediate implementation of national prevention policies. Morales noted that femicides have increased 79% in the last six years. In 2009 alone, 720 women were killed, an average of 60 each month.

September 24: Activists congregated in front of the White House to request that President Obama and the Department of Homeland Security approve Guatemala's petition for Temporary Protective Status. GHRC and a delegation of Guatemalans with the Guatemala Peace and Development Network also met with representatives from the State De-

partment and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

October 1: The United States apologized for a 1946-1948 research study, funded by the National Institutes for Health (NIH), in which people in Guatemala were intentionally infected with sexually transmitted diseases. The tests were carried out on female commercial sex workers, prisoners in the national penitentiary, patients in the national mental hospital, and soldiers. According to the study, more than 1,600 people were infected: 696 with syphilis, 772 with gonorrhea, and 142 with chancres; none were informed they had been infected.

October 5: Luis Ferrate, Minister of the Environment, presented a criminal suit in the Public Prosecutors Office against Montana Exploradora, Inc., subsidiary of Canadian company Goldcorp. The suit aims to instigate government investigation of the flow of residual waste water from the Marlin Mine in San Marcos.

October 13: Guatemala announced it will receive US \$590 million (Q 7.767 billion) for storm reconstruction from loans and donations from different countries and organizations. The government estimates that Q15 billion are needed for reconstruction.

October 14: The Spanish arrested former Guatemalan Minister of the Interior Carlos Vielmann, who is wanted for his connection to the killing of seven inmates of the El Pavon jail during a prison mutiny in 2006. He is expected to be taken before the National Court so extradition can begin.

October 20: In a study recently conducted by the Presidential Women's Secretariat (SEPREM), it is apparent that violence against women has grown since tropical storm Agatha hit at the end of May 2010, particularly in the areas hardest hit. The study was conducted in 30 municipalities in 10 departments. The study also found that there has been a 7% decrease in children attending school since Agatha hit.

October 29: A Guatemalan court sentenced two former members of the National Police with 40-years in prison for the forced disappearance of Fernando Garcia 26 years ago. The trial of Hector Roderico Ramirez Ríos and Abraham Lancerio Gómez included key evidence from the historical archives of the National Po-

lice. Two other men involved in Garcia's disappearance, Hugo Rolando Gómez Osorio and Alfonso Guillermo De León, are still fugitives.

See www.ghrc-usa.org for more recent news updates.



EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALENDAR

Oct. 30– Nov. 7: GHRC leads Unitarian Universalist delegation to Guatemala on immigration.

Nov. 19–21: Close the SOA! Join activists from across the hemisphere to for the annual School of the America's Watch Vigil at the gates of Fort Benning, GA. See www.soaw.org for details.

Dec. 7: Deadline to apply for GHRC's new position, the Human Rights Defenders Program Director.

Dec. 10: International Human Rights Day.

Dec. 12: GHRC holiday fundraising dinner and report on Guatemalan immigration.

Dec. 29–Jan. 9: GHRC leads delegation of American University students to Guatemala.

GHRC is on
Facebook!

Log in to your facebook page and become a fan to get news updates and event invitations.



You are invited to attend:

GHRC'S HOLIDAY FUNDRAISING DINNER

Sunday, December 12, 2010
5:00-8:00pm
Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington
4444 Arlington Blvd, Arlington, VA 22204
\$35 per ticket

Enjoy the holidays with Guatemalan food, music, and dance while learning about the outstanding work of GHRC! Meet and support fellow community members working for social change. Hear from the recent Arlington delegation that traveled to Guatemala and learn more about the root causes of migration from Concepción Chiquirichapa, Quetzaltenango. Support GHRC by participating in our silent auction.

Email intern@ghrc-usa.org or call 202-529-6599 to reserve your seat.

GHRC is Now Hiring!

GHRC seeks experienced, bilingual applicants for the position of **Human Rights Defenders Program Director (PD)**. PD will be responsible for the management of the HRD program in Guatemala under the direction of GHRC's director in Washington, D.C. The PD will also be involved in GHRC delegations and speaking tours and support other programs as needed. Position based in Guatemala, City, Guatemala. Apply by December 7, 2010. See our website for details.



Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

3321 12th Street NE
Washington, DC 20017
Tel: (202) 529-6599
Fax: (202)526-4611
www.ghrc-usa.org

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, DC
Permit NO. 469

Return Service Requested



El Quetzal

A Quarterly Publication

- ⇒ **'For Women's Right to Live Delegation' visits indigenous communities and returns inspired**
- ⇒ **Guatemalan Massacre Participant Sentenced in US**
- ⇒ **The Challenges of Police Reform**