



El Quetzal

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GHRC

November 2008

GHRC Launches New Program Addressing U.S. Economic Policy and the Effects on Immigration

An entire planeload of Guatemalan immigrants leaves the U.S. every day, deporting people who have been forced by economic hardship to abandon their families and communities in search of employment. Bishop Álvaro Ramazzini (of San Marcos, Guatemala) asks us to look carefully at the economic impact of this phenomenon as well as the violations of migrant rights committed in detention centers in the U.S.

The Latino community is the largest minority group in the U.S.,¹ comprising 15% of the population (45.5 million); among them are an estimated 1.5 million are Guatemalans, about half of whom are undocumented and thus subject to incarceration and deportation. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that there are 11.9 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S., or about 4% of the U.S. population.

The U.S. government has criminalized undocumented immigrants, subjecting them to workplace raids, federal charges of identity theft, and denial of basic rights in federal detention centers. Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Peace Laureate (1992)

and former Presidential candidate from Guatemala, addressed a gathering in Postville, Iowa on November 8 to express her concern for and solidarity with the almost 400 immigrants, nearly all Guatemalans, arrested during the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid of May 12, 2008, at a meatpacking plant in that town. With almost no access to legal advice, the workers were pushed into confessing and pleading guilty to Social Security fraud in misusing social security numbers. Many of the workers were not aware they were misusing the numbers; they thought they were just using numbers given to them by management.²

This year, an estimated 40,000 Guatemalans left their homes, communities, and culture to venture north to the U.S., at an average cost of \$5,000 per person.³ The average income in Guatemala is less than \$4 per day; many Guatemalans mortgage their land (often their only possession) or borrow at high interest rates to pay the coyote's fee. Once in the U.S., life as an undocumented immigrant is ruled by fear and lack of access to basic rights such as health care and obtaining a drivers license.

Undocumented immigrants pay billions of dollars a year in income, sales, and property taxes, paying more than they use in government benefits for which they are not eligible for, except in emergency situations for Medicaid).⁴

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Quick Facts

Estimated number of Guatemalans currently living in the U.S.: 1.5 million

Estimated number of Guatemalans who migrated to the U.S. so far this year: 40,000

Average cost, per person, a coyote charges to take someone over the the border: \$5,000

Estimated number of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S.: 11.9 million

Amount sent home each year by Guatemalans in the U.S.: \$4 billion

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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.

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Letter from the Director

It has now been four months since I joined GHRC as its director. I have been impressed by the support I have received from the organization and its friends, and also by the magnitude of the challenges facing us. I thought I would take a few moments to introduce myself to you and to share some of my ideas and aspirations for GHRC.

In June 1993, two weeks after graduating from Penn State University, I joined the Peace Corps and moved to Guatemala. It was my first experience living in Latin America; I rented a pink and blue wooden shack in the Q'uiiché Mayan village of Samayac, Suchitepequez. I spent three and a half years there, working as a small animal husbandry technician with indigenous women's cooperatives. My days were filled with vaccinating chickens, building chicken coops and rabbit hutches, hosting workshops on animal disease prevention and cure, and teaching nutrition classes. The villagers slowly adopted me into their community, one that had suffered greatly during the internal armed conflict of the 1980's.

On December 29, 1996 the Peace Accords were signed, marking a new era in Guatemalan history, ending 36 years of civil war. At about the same time, my Peace Corps work was completed, and I left the country with my backpack to explore Central and South America. As I crossed borders and continents, I realized that I carried Guatemala and its people with me in my heart and mind; I knew that one day I would return.

With that in mind, I decided to broaden my expertise to deal with the issues I could expect to face. I earned two masters degrees in Public Health and Social Work at the University of South Carolina.

Then, after years of working overseas (in China, Bolivia, and most recently, Colombia) as a teacher, researcher, delegation leader and U.S. policy analyst, I returned to the U.S. in 2008. My three years in Colombia had been a transforming experience; it was a crash course in operating effectively in a dangerous environment, as well as dealing with issues of human rights, the effects of a four-decade long war,

and the power of grassroots organizing.

I began working with GHRC in July of this year and have re-entered the world of Guatemala with enthusiasm and a new understanding and appreciation for its people and history. Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of working with GHRC has been meeting with members of the Guatemala solidarity community who founded GHRC and helped it grow into a 26-year-old organization with over 3,000 members.

Since July, I have returned twice to Guatemala on fact-finding missions, to meet GHRC's Guatemalan partners, and participate in the 3rd Social Forum of the Americas. As I walked across the enormous Central Plaza in Guatemala City during the closing ceremony of the Forum on October 12, 2008, I remembered the first time I crossed that square, in 1994. Jennifer Harbury was on a month long hunger strike, sitting on a piece of cardboard. Her determination and strength shone through her weakened body. I was with a friend, a student at the University of San Carlos, who told me "this woman from the U.S. is doing extremely important work for the people of Guatemala." I had no idea that one day Jennifer and I would be discussing asylum cases on the phone; she is an active resource on GHRC's rich advisory board.

Returning to Guatemala has filled my heart and soul to the brim. There have been many changes, both encouraging and discouraging. The small village where I used to live is now bustling with moto-taxis, mini-vans, cell phones, and electricity. Two-story cement houses (built with remittances) and armed robberies have replaced adobe huts and communal coffee harvests. My friend Gaspar, soccer team captain and head of the health promoter's group, once governed the town; a gang of armed narco-traffickers has replaced him. The dirt roads where I hiked for hours are now



Amanda Martin

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Asylum Support for Guatemalans in the U.S.

Asylum seekers are people who are living outside their home countries and are seeking the protection of another country on the grounds that they fear persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion in their homelands.

GHRC provides information vital to political asylum cases including written affidavits and expert witness testimony. GHRC works with a national network of lawyers, legal clinics, law students and non-profit organizations to help open the door for persons seeking refuge from physical harm and danger in Guatemala.

By definition, asylum is the protection that a government grants to refugees and people seeking sanctuary who demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution. An asylum seeker must be in the United States to apply for the protection of the U.S. government.

For the 1991-1999 period, most applicants for asylum in the U.S. came from Guatemala (37,986) and China (26,826). In 2007, the top nationalities granted asylum in the U.S. were: China, Colombia,

and Haiti. In 2007, 47,000 asylum claims were made in the U.S. and 25,270 were granted, of whom 681 were Guatemalans.

Individuals granted asylum are authorized to work in the United States. In addition, an asylee is entitled to benefits including employment assistance, a social security card, and social services.

GHRC has worked on ten asylum cases between August and November 2008.

One case involves a 19 year-old boy who lived in a gang controlled neighborhood of Guatemala City. At age 14, he organized a soccer team and was forced to pay an extortion "tax" by the gang. His team ran out of money and began receiving death threats. He fled to the U.S. after two of his team members were killed. Today, only three of the 11 soccer boys are still alive.

Another case involves a ten year old girl who lived in a gang controlled neighborhood. She was harassed daily on her way to and from school. Her friends and cousins were taunted and several of them raped. She lived with her blind grandmother, who was unable to pro-

tect her. She fled to the U.S. and is seeking asylum.

An additional case involves a former Guatemalan police officer who witnessed corruption among his colleagues. He reported the crime and subsequently received death threats and was attacked. He fled to the U.S. and has applied for asylum.

Providing support for these individual cases is one way in which GHRC works to help those persecuted and marginalized in Guatemala. In particular, we assist political asylum candidates such as massacre survivors, indigenous persons, children, women, unionists, and community leaders.

DID YOU KNOW...

*GHRC provides affidavits and/or expert testimony to an average of 25 cases a year.

*Over the last two years, GHRC has worked with lawyers in 15 states, and one in Ontario, Canada.

Letter From the Director

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paved and controlled by armed men who shoot to kill during coffee harvest season (when cash is flowing). The people are still Mayan, still fighting for their rights to land, food sovereignty, clean drinking water, public education, security, and health care. Now they are living under the control of organized crime, gangs, narco-traffickers, corrupt police and politicians, and a system that prioritizes profits over people.

There is much work to do, to support the rights of the Guatemalan people, both in Guatemala and among those who have been forced to flee. In this first issue of our new quarterly publication, *El Quetzal*,

which is replacing the 'Update,' we highlight our new program area. The latest wave of Guatemalan migrants to the U.S., also known as "CAFTA Refugees", are victims of U.S. trade policy. The "Central American Free Trade Agreement" destroys local economies, benefits big business, and forces people to consume heavily subsidized foreign products while working to produce goods for export, at low wages with no benefits. GHRC has joined the National Capital Immigration Coalition to work towards immigration reform that recognizes and supports human rights on both sides of the border, including the right to not migrate.

It is an understatement to say that there is a lot of work to be done. GHRC is making important contributions to that effort. So thank you for your continued interest and support of the Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA. Your generosity makes our work possible and is an inspiration to everyone in the organization.

Sincerely,



Amanda Martin

Goldcorp's Mining in San Miguel Ixtahuacán has Disastrous Effects

*"All of the **damages** that the experts warned us of, before the arrival of the mining project, **have occurred**: deforestation, extreme dust, contamination of water sources, dry wells, competition for water usage, and accumulation of dangerous waste products from the mine."*

—Association of the Integral Development of San Miguel (ADISMI)

By Amanda Martin

In August 2008, I traveled to the San Miguel Ixtahuacán region of San Marcos with an international medical brigade. The team visited 5 Mayan (Mam) communities whose land and lives are affected by the Marlin Mine, where the Canadian Goldcorp Company is extracting the estimated 2.4 million ounces of gold (at \$725 per ounce) from an open-pit, cyanide leaching mine. Goldcorp pays only 1% royalties (tax on non-renewable resources) to the Guatemalan government, of which almost none is invested in these communities who suffer the consequences of environmental contamination (including deforestation, air pollution, respiratory problems, skin disease, destruction of homes, and poisoning of the drinking water supply with cyanide and 5 other heavy metals).



A very sick man from the town of Agel suffers from severe skin rashes, itching, hair loss, and dermatitis. He attributes his condition to air pollution and water contamination from the Marlin Mine.



The 350 acre open pit Marlin Mine in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos.

The Marlin mine is a project of Canadian mining giant Goldcorp, which is now the world's 3rd largest mining company (after merging with U.S.-owned Glamis Gold in 2006). Glamis began constructing the mine in 2004 with a \$45 million loan from the World Bank. Commercial production began late in 2005 and is projected to produce until at least 2015. The pit covers 350 acres; 615 acres were deforested for the project.

The Guatemalan Government has granted almost 10% of the entire country (over 550 mining concessions) to international

"We demand immediate suspension of mining activity, reparation for damages, and a complete shutdown of the mining process."

— Aniseto Lopez, Mayan Mayor of Sub'chal

mining companies for exploitation of precious metals, including gold, nickel, silver, and copper. The mining industry also brings increased militarization, the presence of private security, and social conflict between communities and armed guards. While driving down the dirt road towards the community of Agel, in the shadow of the mine, our jeep was followed by armed mine guards and a police truck. "They won't stop us if we have international accompaniment," Javier explained. Javier is a community leader who has helped organize the 8 community referendums in the region, where over 95% of the people have voted against the mine.

erendums in the region, where over 95% of the people have voted against the mine.

"The Guatemalan government violated our legal rights as indigenous peoples. There was no consultation process, as declared in the International Labor Organization Covenant 169, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Guatemalan Constitution, and Municipal Law. In order for Goldcorp to come here, they had to consult with us prior to any activity on our land," Javier explains. I met

Javier at a "Communities in Resistance to Mining" conference in Colombia, in August 2007. He presented to a crowded hall of displaced indigenous and Afro-Colombian people, sharing the story of the Mam people and recognizing the similar tragedy in Colombia. "Last year, the Guatemalan Constitutional Court ruled that the results of our community referendums are not legally binding. This is a violation of international and national law," he added.

The mine uses 250,000 liters of water per hour to separate gold from rock, but pay



Gregoria Crisanta cut the electric wires installed in her backyard. Goldcorp had warrant issued for her arrest.

The mine uses 250,000 liters of water per hour to separate gold from rock, but pay

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Voiceless Speak Program Recipients Educate Their Communities

Since 1987, GHRC/USA has encouraged Guatemalans in the U.S. to speak truth to power through the Voiceless Speak program. This program assists Guatemalan survivors of human rights abuses who are living in the United States.

The Voiceless Speak project provides a scholarship to Guatemalans with personal experiences of human rights violations, to inform people in the U.S. about the situation in Guatemala and the root causes of political violence.

In 2008, the GHRC Board Committee selected five recipients of this grant from across the country.

Mr. Jorge Sactic is one of those recipients. Jorge was born in San Pedro Sacatepequez, near Guatemala City, in 1962. He grew up between San Pedro, Puerto Barrios, and Chiquimula and studied economics at San Carlos University during the 1980s.

Economics and law students were targeted by the military dictatorship for their "leftist politics." The 1980s were an especially dangerous time, and Jorge left for the U.S. in 1985, when students and faculty at his university were under attack. Jorge now lives in Hyattsville, MD. He has two children, aged 22 and 23. He started the Chapina Bakery in 1994 and now works as a business consultant for the DC area.

Jorge continues to be active in his community, and is able to bridge the business arena and the Guatemalan community. He is the President of the Merchants Organization in Langley Park (LUMA), with a membership of 30 business owners, half

of whom are Guatemalan. Jorge is also an elected representative of CONAMIGUA, the National Council for Guatemalan Immigrant Attention.



Jorge Sactic

He also serves as the director of AGUA, an umbrella organization of Guatemalan representatives who live in the U.S. AGUA was founded in 2004 and currently has 15 active members. AGUA is a united front that fights for Guatemalans' rights in the United States (and specifically in the D.C. area) and works to improve living conditions for families that are struggling to survive.

"Guatemalan businesses are suffering from the financial and economic crisis," Jorge stated. However, he stressed, "any U.S. government or non-governmental organization that seeks to design or fund programs or projects for Guatemalans (in Guatemala or the U.S.) needs to first consult with Guatemalans. AGUA is a representative body that can serve this role." The Voiceless Speak funds support Jorge in his important work.

Jorge is also an artist; he enjoys creating

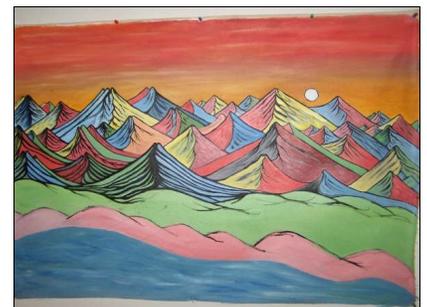
oil paintings of nature, mountain scenes, lakes, and the countryside.

Other recipients this year include Carlos Gomez, Mario Avila, Carols Albacete, and Astrid Noriega. Carlos Gomez, based in Chicago, IL, is the coordinator of the Foundation for Human Rights in Guatemala and has spoken at events across the country. Mario gives presentations about human rights issues in the Los Angeles metro area of California targeted at students and academicians. Carlos Albacete runs a non-profit from DC called Trópico Verde which focuses on environmental conservation in Guatemala.

GHRC/USA provides direct assistance to Guatemalans in the U.S. who:

- suffered human rights abuses in Guatemala;
- are in financial need;
- are engaged in Guatemala human rights work under the auspices of a human rights group or other appropriate organization.

If you meet the criteria and are interested in applying, please visit our website for more information on the application process.



One of Jorge Sactic's Paintings

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Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala : *Seeking Justice, Digging up Bones*

Manuel Cael Morales is a Mayan community leader in the town of La Camá II, department of Q'uché, in the central highlands of Guatemala. He and his community are working on the exhumation of mass graves in order to rebury their family members in dignified graves and to document the history of the internal armed conflict that ravaged the area during the 80s and 90s.

In 1982 there was a massacre in the nearby village of Chupol, where paramilitary troops (PAC) killed 119 villagers and disposed of their bodies in mass graves. Surrounding villages organized to form the Asociación K'amalbé Rech Tinamit Ixim Ulew, or the "Association that Guides the People of the Land of Corn," which was legally recognized in 1987. Three hundred and sixty families now belong to the organization. With the help of the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala, they have been exhuming the graves since 2004. To date, they have participated in 23 exhumations and reburied 44 bodies.

Uncovering these graves – and unearthing the brutal realities of the still recent armed conflict – is dangerous, and those involved have received death threats for their work. Some of the former Civil Defense Patrol (PAC) members who murdered the Mayan villagers in the 1980s still live in the community and do not want the evidence of their crimes uncovered during the exhumations. As recently as May 2008, a truck with unidentified armed men stopped at Manuel's house during the early morning hours demanding that he go with them. He remained inside with his family as the men shouted out threats, hoping to scare him into stopping his exhumation work.

Their work continues despite the death threats for three important reasons. First, the process empowers and dignifies the surviving families, allowing them to give

their loved ones a proper burial in the community cemetery. Second, scientific evidence provided by the forensic anthropologists tells the true history and validates the communities' oral histories. Finally, evidence is uncovered that may be used to investigate the crimes and hold the material authors responsible for the massacres.

Manuel has nine children. He was forced to join the military in the late 1970s and then returned to his community, where he was pressured by the guerrilla (EGP, Guerrilla Army of the Poor) to join the resistance. He lived through the violence of the internal armed conflict of the 1980s, including the 1982 massacre, where his uncle was beheaded.

The current President of the community's Association, Manuel has been to the United States three times: to speak with members of the U.S. Congress, to participate in a GHRC speaker's tour, and, in the Spring of 2008, as a speaker at the UN Convention on Indigenous Peoples in New York.

GHRC launched the *Human Rights De-*

fenders Program in late Summer 2007 in response to the continuous and severe increase in threats and attacks against human rights defenders in Guatemala. Since the Program's inception, GHRC has worked to raise awareness among the international community about the increasing assaults while also providing political accompaniment and support for those affected. Manuel is just one of many human rights defenders who has been supported by GHRC's program.

Don Manuel is back on tour with GHRC!

From November 15-25, 2008, Manuel will travel to Washington, DC, Philadelphia, West Chester County, PA, and Columbus, GA. His tour culminates at the School of the Americas Watch rally on November 22 and 23. There he will address the crowd of an estimated 20,000 activists as well as participate in a GHRC workshop on Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala.



Manuel Cael Morales, his wife, and five of their nine children in La Camá II, Q'uché.

Hemispheric Solidarity and a Call for Change at Social Forum

In mid October, GHRC staff participated in the third annual Social Forum of the Americas. The Forum, a regional gathering in the spirit of the World Social Forum, brought together international activists, indigenous community leaders, NGOs, union members and journalists from all over the western hemisphere. Though diverse in language, customs and expertise, the participants were united in opposition to the unregulated free market economic model and unified in the belief that "another America is possible."

Forum events, held at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City, began each morning with a Mayan ceremony and closed with musical and cultural events. Hundreds of workshops filled the hours in-between. Two themes were obvious: opposition to international agreements regarding free trade and security, and discussion of the social and environmental effects of global warming and megaprojects. Workshops focusing on how these issues relate to women or indigenous peoples consistently attracted a large number of participants.

The Forum is a heartening display of regional solidarity and offers a unique learning environment. Walk into any workshop and you would see, for example, Q'uché campesinos, Canadians, women leaders from Nicaragua and Honduras, Ladinos, professors and student activists sharing experiences. A highlight of the Forum was the daily Historical Memory Project workshop by CALDH (the Guatemalan Legal Action Center for Human Rights), in which many Guatemalans shared their experiences of the internal armed conflict, and generated national and international solidarity for their continuing fight for justice. The room was often overflowing, and in between personal testimony, the room erupted in call and response shouts such as "planting memories...we harvest the struggle."

Common Themes

There was clear consensus among indigenous communities, progressives, NGOs and unions against the economic, social, and environmental effects of the world's emerging "corptocracy." The term refers to the trend of large multinational corporations having the power to control decision making at the highest levels, create



Participants at the Social Forum of the Americas say "No" to the Merida Initiative.

laws in their favor, and control the world's natural resources to market as commodities. They do so with the collaboration of national governments through international agreements such as NAFTA, DR-CAFTA, AdA (European Agreement of Association), and Plan Puebla Panama (PPP). These agreements, which are negotiated between countries behind closed doors with far-reaching implications, are widely criticized as limiting national sovereignty and being highly undemocratic.

The parallel security agreements, such as the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), and the Merida Initiative, which are presented as measures to address citizen security, increase militarization in Mexico and Central America and often help protect corporate interests. They make it increasingly difficult for citizens to voice opposition to harmful policies and are projected to increase state violence and repression. Once again, it is civil society – women and indigenous communities most of all – that suffers.

GHRC Leads Workshop on the Merida Initiative

GHRC, along with Americas Policy Project, Narco News and Radio Zurda (a Salvadoran progressive radio program), presented a workshop on the Merida Initiative to a packed room. The Initiative is a U.S. aid package to Mexico and Central America to combat organized crime, drug trafficking, and gang activity and is seen as the next phase of the U.S. War on Drugs.

According to the funding for the coming year, approved in June 2008, Mexico will receive \$400 million, Central America \$60 million, and Haiti and the Dominican Republic \$5 million. The funding for Central America is destined for economic support, law enforcement equipment (digital thumbprint machines and ballistic testing equipment, among other items), personnel training, and increased border control. The aid package has been widely criticized for not focusing enough on prevention programs and for its lack of human rights provisions. A small percentage of funding can be withheld under the Leahy Law, which prohibits funding to corrupt police or military units, but in a region with rampant police corruption and violence, it is a weak attempt at addressing a huge problem.

GHRC plans to continue monitoring the effects of the Initiative and, along with its co-presenters, is calling for a complete renegotiation of the plan when congress discusses funding for 2010.



Katie Kohlstedt (Americas Policy Project), Amanda Martin (GHRC Director) and Kelsey Alford-Jones (GHRC) at the closing ceremony in Guate's central plaza.

Human Rights *UPDATE*

IN BRIEF

The Right of Human Rights Defenders to Work Without Fear of Reprisals

10/30/08: Armed men entered the patio of the house of **Miguel Arturo Albizures Pedrosa**, vice-president of the Association for Communication and Art (COMUNICARTE) at 8pm, firing over 50 bullets. Miguel's son was alone in the house and was able to shelter himself to avoid harm. The assailants intended to assassinate or injure the whole family. In February 2007, the COMUNICARTE office was raided and a valuable historical video documentary collection was stolen. Videos made by COMUNICARTE have been used as evidence in massacre cases.

10/19/08: a relative of **Norma Cruz**, the director of the Survivors' Foundation, was stopped in Guatemala City by an unknown man driving a pick-up truck. Two masked men were in the back of the truck, one of them holding a gun at her. She was threatened with death but released after 20 minutes. Four days later, the victim was called three times, receiving more death threats. GHRC has sent a letter to the Minister of the Interior and the Guatemalan President, demanding a full investigation of the attack, and requesting security measures for the family. See <http://www.ghrc-usa.org/ActionNormaCruz.htm> for more details.

9/4/08. **Yuri Melini**, environmental activist, lawyer, and Director of Center of Legal Action in Environment and Social issues (CALAS) was shot outside his house in Guatemala City by masked gunmen. In June 2008, CALAS won a legal process in the Constitutional Court of Guatemala to change and censure the mining law that violates Guatemalans' land, environmental, and health rights by permitting open pit mining for gold and other metals, contamination of water sources and occupation of land in nature reserves.

Violation of Peace Accords

President Colom announced that he will increase the Guatemalan National Police to 30,000 troops by 2011. There are currently 18,600 troops. He will also increase the Army by 9,500 troops. The 1996 Peace Accords limit the army's role to defending the nation against foreign attack, helping in times of natural disasters and bolstering the civilian police when necessary to safeguard public order. Currently, joint operations of police and military patrolling cities and towns are in violation of this agreement. The Peace Accords included a one-third reduction of Army troops, from 45,000 to 30,820 personnel. Colom's new plan will increase the army to over 40,000 troops.

New Phase on War on Drugs

A new special force to combat organized crime and narcotrafficking in Northern Guatemala, called the "Green Battalions" will work with the Army and the National Police in Izabal, Alta Verapaz, Quiché, and Petén. The budget comes from the Ministry of Defense. Izabal is a key drug port for Colombian cocaine. The Drug Enforcement Agency and the Narcotics Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy have provided 6 helicopters for training of pilots, to recover farms currently occupied by narcotraffickers. U. S. ambassador Stephen McFarland supports increased cooperation in the war on drugs, as \$200,000 will be invested in a Commission Against Addictions and the Illicit Trafficking of Drugs for prevention programs in 2009.

RECENT HEADLINES

- 9/4/08. **Yuri Melini**, environmental activist, lawyer, and Director of Center of Legal Action in Environment and Social Issues (CALAS) was shot outside his house in Guatemala city by masked gunmen.
- 9/29/08. President announces **new Antinarcotics Force**, with support from the U.S. DEA and NAS
- 10/1/08. President announces he will **double National Police and Army troops**.
- 10/5/08. **5,000 people protest** against kidnappings in San Marcos.
- 10/7/08. A **raid in Greenville, SC** at Columbia Farms chicken plant resulted in 300 arrests; 187 were Guatemalan workers, who were sent to detention centers in Atlanta.
- 10/8/08. Ex President (2000-2004) **Portillo Extradited**, let out on bail for \$122,000
- 10/19&23/08. Women's Rights Activist **Norma Cruz's** family member receives death threats.
- 10/29/08. National Police and Army **evict 200 families** from farm in Suchitepequez.
- 10/30/2008. Gunmen opened fire on the home of activist and videographer **Miguel Arturo Albizures Pedrosa**, Vice-President of the media organization Asociación COMUNICARTE.

Human Rights *UPDATE*

THIS YEAR IN GUATEMALA

- An average of 100 complaints were filed per month, against the Guatemalan National Police for extortion, theft, bribery, and corruption.
- To date, over 22,000 Guatemalans have been deported from the U.S.; it is expected that over 27,000 will be deported by the end of the year.
- 63 Guatemalan justice workers were threatened
- Violence increases: over 3,600 violent deaths thus far in 2008
- Impunity continues: Since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, 53,071 Guatemalans have been assassinated, with 98% impunity
- As food prices continue to rise, 50% of Guatemalan children suffer chronic malnutrition, the second worst rate in Latin America
- Child labor remains high, with 528,000 Guatemalan children working, mostly in agriculture
- Huehuetenango: 20 towns reject mining concessions in community referendum voting
- Remittances from relatives in the U.S. drop by 30% due to economic crisis; 4.1 million Guatemalan families receive \$345 per month in much needed support
- 63,000 Guatemalan coffee farmers suffer as market price drops below production cost
- Over 40,000 families have suffered property damage due to torrential October rains
- Coatepeque, Quetzaltenango: Government declares State of Siege- one dead, nine wounded as merchants protest relocation of market
- Over 7,000 people have received compensation under the National Reparations Program (totaling \$18 million)

Mining in San Marcos Has Disastrous Effects

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no water bill. The average family uses 60 liters of water per day. Over 40 wells have dried up in the villages surrounding the mine, forcing people to relocate, and harming agricultural production in the region. Desertification is irreversible, as trees are cleared, water is used up, and existing water supplies contaminated. People are pressured, threatened, and coerced into selling their land at very low prices. Women who defend their land are issued arrest warrants and shot with tear gas (as happened to Gregoria Crisanta in June 2008).

"The power of the community referendum process is unification, proclaiming the voice of the people, and exercising

our constitutional right to vote and participate in decisions regarding our land," said Aniseto Lopez, a traditional Mayan leader of the town of Sub'chal. "We demand immediate suspension of mining activity, reparation for damages, and a complete shutdown of the mining process," he added.

From September 8-12, 2008, the Latin American Water Tribunal held its 5th public hearing, 'Hydraulic justice for indigenous lands and territories', in Antigua, Guatemala. Ten cases of indigenous people affected by mining were tried, three of them from Guatemala. The jury of experts and leaders pronounced a verdict against Goldcorp, declaring the com-

pany responsible for damage to the local environment and population of San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa.

GHRC recognizes that the U.S. Free Trade Agreement with Guatemala, as part of CAFTA, allows multinational mining companies to use local resources at no cost, pay extremely low royalties to national governments, maintain low standards for environmental responsibility, and not enforce the ILO Convention #169 that requires consultation with indigenous communities before any action is taken on their land. GHRC is in favor of trade agreements that prioritize people's rights (to land, clean air and water, and health) over corporate profit.

A note to our readers:

The Guatemala Human Rights UPDATE, published biweekly from 1989 until July of 2008, has been discontinued. Our new publication has no subscription fee and is available online. We appreciate your generous contributions that make this possible.

GHRC Launches New Program

Continued from Page 1

The exodus north is felt acutely in Guatemala, where tens of thousands of families have been split apart and communities have begun to unravel. When asked why they are here, most cite the economic hardship at home and the need to support their families.

Clearly, undocumented Latino immigrants are not idealistic entrepreneurs setting out to achieve the "American dream." Rather, they are poor farmers and unemployed urban dwellers facing economic desperation. Our political discourse on immigration has greatly ignored the deeper and more complex question of why Central American economies suffer a staggering lack of economic opportunity, and what the negative impact of this migration has been on economic, social, and cultural rights in many countries.

The U.S. has embraced unregulated free market policies that have led to the loss of over 200,000 jobs in Guatemala over the past two years and caused the price of basic food items to soar, in a country where 50% of the children are chronically malnourished. The implementation of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in 2006 has fueled migration to the North, by allowing multinational corporations to flood local markets with cheap agricultural goods. Meanwhile the profits from Guatemalan exports do not compensate for the loss of jobs and in-

come affecting the majority of citizens. The destruction of the rural sector forces migration to cities, where workers often end up employed at foreign-owned factories, working under terrible conditions and earning very low wages.

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With few options in Guatemala, many turn to the U.S., where even the worst jobs offer higher pay and the opportunities to send money home. Guatemalans living abroad send over \$4 billion per year in remittances (money sent home); their families depend upon this source of income for survival. This cycle of migration, remittances, and dependence will continue until the Guatemalan economy offers real job opportunities with benefits.

GHRC's new program, **U.S. Economic Policy and the Effects on Immigration**, is focused on the tremendous impact of unregulated free market policies on the economic, social, and cultural rights of the Guatemalan people. We aim to contribute to national dialogue about immigration, emphasizing our position that immigrants are often victims of economic violence that has torn apart their community and violates their right to re-

main in their communities, on their land. Furthermore, our program focuses on the rights of the Guatemalan immigrant population in the U.S. and the need for substantial immigration policy reform.

Specifically, the program seeks to (1) inform people in the U.S. on the roots causes of migration, including the effects of free market policies that prevent countries from being able to regulate and protect their own economies and (2) advocate with our partners and in Congress for immigration reform that addresses the effects of U.S. economic policy on migration.

GHRC is a member of the National Capital Immigrant Coalition (NCIC) advocating for these reforms. As a member of the Stop CAFTA Coalition, we continue to report on the effects of free trade in Guatemala.

¹ <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/011910.html>

² http://www.workingimmigrants.com/2008/09/follow_up_on_the_mississippi_i.html

³ Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala, Informe Semanal 37/08

⁴ <http://www.ailadownloads.org/advo/CJPStudiesShowThatUndocumentedImmigrantsContribute.pdf>

Third DR-CAFTA Report Documents Failed Policy in Central America

The Stop CAFTA Coalition, working with partners in Central America, has released its third annual report analyzing the effects of the free trade agreement between the U.S., Central America and the Dominican Republic (DR-CAFTA).

The report's conclusion? The trade agreement has failed to produce any of the positive outcomes promised by its proponents—and has instead contributed to increasing poverty and inequality in the region.

Reflecting the trends documented in past years, articles highlight the dramatic effects on the rural sector, women, and indigenous communities. It finds that economic opportunity for the majority of citizens has drastically declined and migration has increased as many look for a way to afford their basic necessities.

The report focuses on El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua; it also looks at the effects on the U.S. agricultural sector and analyzes other trade agreements under

consideration in the region.

The Stop CAFTA Coalition finds that DR-CAFTA, like NAFTA before it, demonstrates the failure of the "free trade" model in producing economic development, and calls on the Obama Administration to create an alternative agreement that is more just, equitable, and sustainable.

All publications are available in English and Spanish at www.stopcafta.org.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALENDAR

November 15-25: GHRC hosts Manuel Cael Morales on an East Coast speaker's tour

November 22-23: School of the Americas Watch Vigil

November 25: International Day Against Violence Against Women

December 1-6: GHRC hosts Mayan lawyer Maria Dolores who will present three massacre cases against the Guatemalan State at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Organization of American States).

December 10: International Human Rights Day

Stay Informed

Visit our website and sign up for our list serve to receive urgent actions, event invitations, and other important information.

www.ghrc-usa.org

Spring Delegation to Guatemala March 7-15, 2009

DETAILS

- Download an application from our website and send to amartin@ghrc-usa.org by **January 23**.
- Cost of delegation, including transportation, food, lodging, and interpretation, is \$900.
- Delegates are responsible for their own travel arrangements to and from Guatemala City, as well as airport taxes and personal expenses.
- If selected, a non-refundable deposit of **\$100** is due by February 7th, 2009

Immigration and "Free" Trade

Come to Guatemala to learn firsthand

how unregulated free-market policies are pushing farmers off their land, forcing youth to head north, and cause men and women to leave their families in search of a paycheck to send home. We will travel to several communities throughout Guatemala, visit families affected by migration, and see the impact of multinational companies whose profits are prioritized over people under CAFTA. We will also learn of community resistance strategies to combat the negative impacts of the free trade model.

Volunteer or Intern with GHRC!

Interested in getting more involved with the Guatemala Human Rights Commission? Let us know! Whether it is in our DC office or from afar, there are many opportunities to help out. We are looking for translators (must be fluent in Spanish), helpers for large mailings, and passionate activists who would like to help educate or fundraise in their own community. We are also accepting applications for our 2009 Spring and Summer Internship positions.