

# 2013 Annual Report



## GUATEMALA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION/USA

*A non-profit, grassroots, solidarity organization dedicated to promoting human rights in Guatemala and supporting communities and activists who face threats and violence.*

Last year was a tumultuous one for human rights in Guatemala. In response, GHRC expanded our support for victims of abuses and amplified our impact through increased solidarity and advocacy in the US.

In 2013, at least 18 human rights defenders were murdered for their work; hundreds more were threatened or attacked. Communities that demanded recognition of local referendums, and that sustained opposition to large-scale mines and dams, were met with repression. The state of siege (or martial law) declared in several communities, and the massive military operation in Santa Cruz Barillas, exemplified the Guatemalan government's ongoing use of the armed forces to quell social unrest. Survivors of genocide testified in the historic trial of General Ríos Montt, and celebrated justice with his conviction, only to see the verdict overturned ten days later.

GHRC worked to document abuses, educate the public, and advocate on behalf of victims and at-risk communities. We continued to provide direct support for human rights defenders, through observation and accompaniment, urgent actions, emergency funds and the coordination of meetings with key decision makers. Our monitoring and advocacy work focused on addressing five themes: militarization; access to land and natural resources; women's rights; truth, justice and historic memory; and criminalization and impunity. GHRC's base of supporters continued to grow, and, as a community, our solidarity with Guatemalans has helped ensure justice for abuses of the past and present.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2013:

PROVIDED FUNDS  
TO:

**246**

PEOPLE THROUGH  
THE HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS FUND

COORDINATED:

**THIRTY+**  
ADVOCACY MEETINGS

CONGRESS | STATE,  
DEFENSE, & JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENTS

AWARDED  
**VOICELESS SPEAK  
FUND** GRANTS TO:

**FIVE**  
GUATEMALANS  
WORKING IN THE US

PROVIDED  
SUPPORT IN:

**TWENTY**  
ASYLUM CASES

HELD:

**12**

PUBLIC EVENTS

- including -

3 DELEGATION TRIPS

2 SPEAKING TOURS

1 CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

1 AWARD PRESENTATION

GAVE:

**22**

INTERVIEWS FOR  
RADIO, TV, & PRINTED  
NEWS

MONITORED:

**EIGHT**

CONFLICTS ACROSS  
GUATEMALA  
THROUGH  
VERIFICATION TRIPS



# CASE

# UPDATES

## RÍOS MONTT ON TRIAL: THE GENOCIDE CASE

**MARCH 19 - MAY 10:** GHRC staff monitored the genocide trial and advocated for international support for justice. GHRC staff member Dania Rodríguez testified in the trial. GHRC successfully

advocated for US observation of the case through a campaign that included 2,176 emails sent by GHRC supporters to the US Ambassador to Guatemala. The Ambassador himself attended the trial, and the US Ambassador-At-Large for War Crimes also traveled to Guatemala and made public statements supporting the process.

**MAY:** GHRC contributed to several media pieces on the genocide case, including live interviews on Al Jazeera English and BBC World Service, with an audience of 43 million people.

**JUNE:** Supporters shared messages of solidarity with GHRC and the survivors of genocide in Guatemala after radical, right-wing allies of the military attacked and threatened GHRC on Facebook. The attack was a result of GHRC's participation in an event to raise awareness about genocide around the world.

**JULY:** GHRC assisted lawyers from the genocide case in building international support around the case, organizing and interpreting at meetings with international human rights lawyers and other relevant offices.

**AUGUST:** Participants on a GHRC-led delegation handed over dozens of messages of support from our base to women survivors of genocide.

**OCTOBER:** GHRC participated in coordinated efforts to denounce appeals to grant Ríos Montt amnesty.

## SANTA CRUZ BARILLAS CASE



## "LA PUYA" CASE

**FEBRUARY:** GHRC provided ongoing support to community members who had been illegally detained for their opposition to a hydroelectric dam. GHRC staff members attended their trials, and – after their release – provided financial support for travel and other urgent expenses.

**SEPTEMBER:** GHRC participated in meetings between human rights organizations, as well as the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman and Attorney General, to voice concerns about militarization and acts of repression against communities in northern Huehuetenango.

**OCTOBER:** To address the growing number of baseless charges against leaders from Barillas and across the country, GHRC and partners participated in an IACHR hearing about criminalization in Guatemala.

**YEAR-ROUND:** GHRC provided international accompaniment to members of La Puya – a non-violent movement in opposition to a gold mine – as they met with Guatemalan government institutions, including the Human Rights Ombudsman's office, the Ministry of the Interior, and the National Dialogue System. GHRC also campaigned on behalf of Yolanda Oqueli to prevent her OAS-mandated protective measures from being revoked by Guatemalan authorities.

**JUNE:** With GHRC support, Álvaro Sandoval, a leader at La Puya, traveled to Reno, NV to coordinate with local anti-mining activists there. Several media outlets covered the protest they organized.

# ADVOCACY

- ▶ Coordinated and attended approximately 30 advocacy meetings with Guatemalan partners during their visits to DC, including with US congressional offices and with the State, Defense, and Justice Departments.
- ▶ Helped coordinate advocacy meetings for a delegation representing communities affected by the Chixoy Dam in Baja Verapaz. As a result of these meetings, and decades of advocacy on the part of the communities and partner organizations, the US Senate drafted legislation requiring the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to push for reparations for the affected communities.
- ▶ Successfully advocated for human rights conditions on funds to the Guatemalan Army through joint letters, congressional meetings, and other advocacy.
- ▶ Published a report, as part of the Mesoamerican Working Group (MAWG), titled "Rethinking the Drug War in Central America and Mexico," and presented concerns and findings from the report at a congressional briefing.

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS:

- > GHRC pushed for effective implementation of precautionary measures for human rights defenders in Guatemala, including Yolanda Oquelí, leader at La Puya, and Lolita Chavez, of the K'iche' People's Council.
- > GHRC's continued advocacy for precautionary measures for communities that were forcefully evicted from the Polochic Valley led to the first hand-over of land by the Guatemalan government to 140 of the almost 800 affected families.
- > GHRC and partners successfully requested an IACHR hearing on criminalization in Guatemala.

# EDUCATION & OUTREACH



## SPEAKING TOURS

- ▶ This spring, indigenous rights activist Lolita Chávez spoke to hundreds of people in the DC area, as well as to US officials, during a GHRC-organized speaking tour.
- ▶ In November, Xinka feminist and land rights leader Lorena Cabnal also spoke to thousands in Texas and Georgia about militarization and indigenous women's rights, including from the main stage at the School of the Americas Watch Vigil in Fort Benning, GA.

## DELEGATIONS

- ▶ In partnership with the American University Alternative Break Program, GHRC led a delegation of students to Guatemala in January. GHRC was awarded Break Away's "Alternative Break Host Site of the Year" for this program.
- ▶ GHRC led back-to-back delegations to Guatemala in August focused on women's rights and land rights.

## GHRC EVENTS

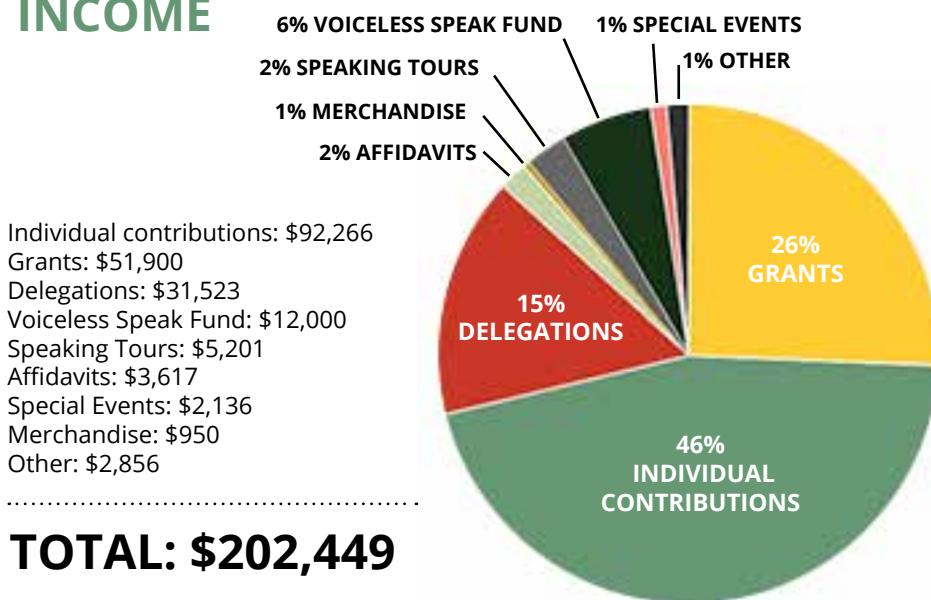
- ▶ GHRC staff and partners presented on "Destructive Mining in Latin America and Grassroots Resistance" in an event that was covered by Spanish language TV.
- ▶ GHRC staff led a presentation on indigenous rights, alongside indigenous leaders from Guatemala and the US, to hundreds in Omaha, Nebraska.
- ▶ GHRC presented our second annual Alice Zachmann Human Rights Defenders Award to the Guatemala Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit (UDEFEQUA).
- ▶ GHRC participated in a panel on judicial independence in Guatemala that included Ambassador-At-Large for War Crimes Stephen Rapp and President of the Criminal Chamber of Guatemala's Supreme Court César Barrientos.
- ▶ GHRC was recognized with a United Nation's Association - National Capital Area (UNA-NCA) Community Human Rights Award.

# DIRECT SUPPORT TO DEFENDERS

- ▶ Provided direct support to over 246 human rights defenders, including:
  - > Assisting various defenders with travel expenses for meetings or to testify in court.
  - > Providing funding for emergency housing and relocation.
  - > Assisting with expenses for a press conference for 11 women who were gang-raped by mining company security and Guatemalan police and soldiers.
  - > Providing financial support to 28 children of defenders who had been threatened, attacked, or assassinated.
- ▶ Participated in verification missions and ongoing monitoring of conflicts in eight communities across Guatemala: San Jose/San Pedro ("La Puya"); San Juan Sacatepéquez; Polochic Valley; San Rafael las Flores; Santa Maria Xalapán; Santa Cruz del Quiché; and Nebaj.
- ▶ Provided strategic support to three additional communities: Monte Verde, Livingston; Santa Cruz Barillas; and Santa Eulalia.
- ▶ Provided asylum support, including research, expert affidavits, or court testimony, in over 20 cases.
- ▶ Awarded grants to five Guatemalans in the US to support their human rights work in their local communities through our Voiceless Speak Fund.
- ▶ Participated in meetings in the Polochic Valley in August alongside IACHR Special Rapporteur Dinah Shelton.
- ▶ Generated over 1600 emails to Guatemalan officials demanding justice for the massacre in Nacahuil, Guatemala.
- ▶ With coalition partners, gathered over 150 organizational signers on a letter presented to presidents from the US, Mexico, and Central America, calling for an end to militarization in the region.

## FINANCIALS

### INCOME



### EXPENSES

