

September 23, 2004

GUATEMALA: CHIXOY DAM REPARATIONS CAMPAIGN

URGENT ACTION NEEDED

Days after agreeing in writing to negotiate compensation and reparations owed to the communities affected by the Chixoy hydro-electric dam project (1975-1985), funded and supervised by the World Bank (WB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Guatemalan government is bringing charges against the leaders of the Coordinadora de Comunidades Afectadas por la Represa Chixoy (Coordinator of Communities Affected by the Chixoy Dam), the very people they signed the agreement with.

LETTERS NEEDED: Please write letters and send them to Guatemalan government and WB and IDB officials listed below.

For interviews concerning the Chixoy Dam/ Rio Negro massacres Reparations Campaign, contact Rights Action: Grahame Russell, t: (416) 654-2074, info@rightsaction.org.

Please re-distribute this information and wide. If you want on/ off this elist: info@rightsaction.org.

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Guatemala City, September 23, 2004  
Urgent Action (prepared by Rights Action)

GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT'S PERSECUTION OF CHIXOY DAM MASSACRE SURVIVORS AND DISPLACED PEOPLE THREATENS NEGOTIATIONS FOR COMPENSATION OF DAM-RELATED DAMAGES AND THE TRIAL OF MATERIAL AUTHORS OF THE MASSACRES, RE-ENFORCING IMPUNITY AND DISCRIMINATION

In 1982, almost 400 Maya Achi men, women and children from the village of Rio Negro were tortured, raped and massacred by the Guatemalan Army. The repression was, according to the United Nations Truth Commission, a result of the community's peaceful opposition to being forcibly displaced from the lands where they had lived for hundreds of years, to make way for the construction of the Chixoy dam, a project of the World Bank (WB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Today, the Guatemalan Government has formally accused massacre survivors and displaced people with terrorism for their peaceful occupation of the Chixoy Dam installations on September 7, 2004 [previous Rights Action information available on request], through a complaint initiated in the Public Prosecutor's office by the National Electrification Institute (INDE).

The peaceful protest of the communities affected by the Chixoy dam demanded compensation for land, homes, property and livelihood destroyed, stolen and lost as a result of the Chixoy dam project.

The attitude of the Guatemalan Government in pursuing criminal charges demonstrates a lack of will to reach a negotiated settlement in spite of having signed, on September 8, an agreement to negotiate proper compensation.

The actions of the Guatemalan government endanger not only the possibility of establishing a negotiation table but also the massacre survivor's ability to participate in the trial scheduled to begin October 19, 2004, of some of the material authors of the March 13, 1982 massacre of 107 children and 70 women in Rio Negro. This is the only massacre of approximately 600 massacres committed by the Guatemalan government (as identified by the United Nations Truth Commission) to come to trial in national courts.

#### CONTEXT

For more than 20 years, the 17 villages, which were forcibly and illegally displaced by the construction of the Chixoy Dam, have lived in extreme poverty as a direct result of the loss of lands through the construction of the dam and the flooding of the dam basin. Every year the situation of dam affected people worsens, while the Guatemalan National Electrification Company benefits from profits generated off the flooded land which remains property of the Mayan communities.

The Guatemalan Government never undertook the process constitutionally established to expropriate land for national development projects, and thus never came to a negotiated agreement with communities as to the terms of their resettlement. Instead the communities were forcibly displaced by a series of five massacres. Those communities not massacred left their homes after learning what happened in the village of Rio Negro and when they were flooded by water after INDE began filling the dam basin.

The land titles to this day remain in the name of the affected communities. The continued occupation of Mayan communal lands also constitutes a violation of international agreements signed and ratified by the Guatemalan government relating to the rights of indigenous people.

The WB and IDB funded and supervised the Chixoy dam project despite the violent and illegal actions of the Guatemala Government.

For almost ten years, displaced communities and NGOs have pressured the Banks through letters and visits to bank offices, investigative reports, and letters to insure proper resettlement and reparations, but the Banks have not taken any real steps to insure proper resettlement and reparations for the affected people. The Banks have however profited from the Chixoy dam through loan payments by the Guatemalan governments.

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It is urgent that the international community express outrage for the continued repression and violation of basic human rights on the part of the Guatemalan government, demanding that the government not lay charges against the leaders of the Coordinator of Communities Affected by the Chixoy Dam and that the Government and Banks negotiate in good faith with the Chixoy Dam affected communities.

SEND LETTERS REQUESTING GOOD FAITH NEGOTIATIONS FOR REPARATIONS AND AN END OF THE PERSECUTION OF CHIXOY AFFECTED PEOPLE TO:

CONTACT ADDRESSES:

-- WORLD BANK

Mr. James D. Wolfensohn

President  
The World Bank  
1818 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20433

Attention to:  
Minneh M. Kane  
[Asst. to the President]  
F: 202-522-1677  
E: mkane@worldbank.org

Donna Dowsett  
Director, Central America Country Management Unit  
E: ddowsettcoirol@worldbank.org  
T: (202)473-0121  
F: (202)676-1464

Carmen Gadala  
World Bank External Affairs Officer  
E: cgadala@worldbank.org

Mario Marroquin  
The World Bank, Guatemala City  
E: mmarroquin@worldbank.org

-- INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Mr. Enrique Iglesias  
President  
The Inter-American Development Bank  
1300 New York Ave. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20577

Jairo Sánchez  
Deputy Manager, Regional Operations - Department II  
E: jairos@iadb.org

Peter Bate, Media Liaison  
E: peterb@iadb.org

-- GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT

Attorney General  
Juan Luis Florido  
Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público  
8a. Avenida 10-67, Zona 1,  
Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala  
F: 011 502 251 2218  
Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/Dear Sir

Minister of the Interior  
Carlos Vielman  
Ministro de Gobernación  
6a. Avenida 4-64, Zona 4, nivel 3  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
F: 011 502 362 0237  
E: ministro@mingob.gob.gt

Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister

Human Rights Ombudsman  
Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado  
Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos (PDH)  
12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
F: 011 502 238 1734

Ambassador Guillermo Castillo  
Embassy of Guatemala  
2220 R St. NW  
Washington DC 20008  
F: 202 745 1908  
E: ambassador@guatemala-embassy.org

-- OTHER

Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and  
Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People  
Commission on Human Rights  
United Nations  
Mailing address:  
El Colegio de Mexico  
Apdo. 20-671  
Mexico 01000, D.F.  
Mexico  
T/f: (52) 55 54 49 30 88  
e: rstaven@post.com

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