

Rights Action – May 17, 2011
Guatemala Impunity Watch

“DRUG WAR” MASSACRE IN GUATEMALA, ON TOP OF NORMAL REPRESSION & IMPUNITY

At least 27 massacred in Guatemala on May 15th; most victims are beheaded

FUND ARE NEEDED

for human rights groups that courageously continue to try and build full respect for the rule of law from the grassroots level up. (See below)

BELOW: An AFP article about the massacre and beheadings

THE CONTEXT – FORWARD TO THE PAST

Read the following articles, to get a broader understanding of the context of repression and impunity in Guatemala for the elite, powerful sectors – including international businesses & investors – and for the corrupted “parallel” powers that are intertwined with and infiltrated in State institutions: military, police, congress, public ministry [attorney general], judiciary, etc.

http://rightsaction.org/articles/Guatemala_upcoming_elections_042811.html

http://rightsaction.org/articles/US_glosses_over_PerezMolina_050211.html

Guatemala has not experienced a massacre of this magnitude since the worst years of U.S.-backed military repression and State terrorism during the “cold war” in the 1970s, 80s & 90s. The beheadings are also a brutal tactic borrowed from the recent past, part of the State strategy of terrorization.

ZETAS

The article alleges that the “Zetas” carried out this massacre. Many Zetas are former Guatemala soldiers and officers, members of the elite “Kaibiles” fighting command, the most feared of the U.S. trained, armed and financed Guatemala forces during the “cold war”. Kaibiles received special jungle warfare training and instruction, including from U.S. soldiers and trainers. The Kaibiles were found, by the United Nations Truth Commission (1999), to have planned and carried out wars crimes (including disappearances, torture, massacres, etc) and genocide in certain Mayan regions of the country.

WAR ON DRUGS

The article does not go into how this spike in brutality and violence in Guatemala is in the context of the U.S. driven “war on drugs” that funds and seeks a military solution in Mexico and now in Central America, to a complex global phenomena that has its roots in the massive demand for illegal drugs in the USA.

GOOD PLACE FOR BUSINESS

It is in this context of generalized impunity for the wealthy and powerful, of a corrupted democracy and administration of justice, and of generalized violence and repression, that Canadian-American mining companies - and other global corporations - are operating mines in Guatemala.

- Please re-distribute this information all around
- To get on/off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Rights Action's Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rights-Action/176850879028427?ref=ts>

- What to do: see below

QUESTIONS, MORE INFORMATION:

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MEXICAN DRUG GANG SUSPECTED IN GUATEMALA MASSACRE

By Edgar Calderon (AFP)

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gaTq7WQNr4Agul6HDVHGjdB5xF9g?docId=CNG.b8e248e01f0016c2b08efefe5b618571.d01>

SAN BENITO, Guatemala — Guatemalan authorities on Monday identified 15 of 27 migrant farm workers beheaded near the Mexican border in a weekend massacre they blamed on Mexico's brutal Zetas drug gang. The killings at "Los Cocos" farm in La Libertad, in the Peten region some 600 kilometers (373 miles) north of the capital Guatemala City, were the worst in the violent Central American nation's recent history. Three minors and two women were among the victims, authorities said. Among those identified, the youngest victim was 13 years old.

Interior Minister Carlos Menocal said Monday that the killers had been seeking to murder the farm's owner in a region where the Zetas are blamed for rising violence. "We believe that the Zetas were seeking Otto Salguero (the owner), because the weekend massacre raised suspicions he was implicated in drug trafficking," Menocal told Emisoras Unidas radio. "We don't yet have conclusive proof that he was involved in drug trafficking," he added.

Thirty to 40 men armed with assault rifles stormed the farm, asking the workers for the owner's whereabouts, Menocal said. One of three survivors told AFP that the hitmen said they were looking for Salguero. "I was washing when they told us not to move and started to shoot. They started killing at around 7 pm Saturday and finished at around 3 am Sunday," he added, declining to reveal his name. "I'm alive thanks to God. I played dead when they stabbed me in the stomach, then I hid and left at around 5 am and I came across a pile of human heads," said the pale-faced 23-year-old in a Guatemala hospital bed.

A doctor from the National Institute of Forensic Sciences on Monday read out the names of 15 victims, outside a morgue in nearby San Benito. Earlier reports put the death toll slightly higher.

Menocal blamed the killings, as well as a string of recent murders in the area, on the Zetas -- a Mexican drug gang with tentacles stretching from the southwestern United States into Central America. Police chief Jaime Otzin said investigators were probing possible links to the murder on Saturday of Haroldo Lara Leon, a farmer and brother of the late drug trafficker Juan Jose Leon, who was killed by the Zetas gang in 2008. Four teams of investigators and a police special forces unit were sent to search for clues in an area where the Zetas have been known to operate.

The Zetas have already spread fear across Mexico for their alleged involvement in a string of massacres, kidnappings and beheadings. They were formed in the 1990s by former elite Mexican military personnel who became enforcers for the Gulf cartel. The groups are now engaged in a brutal turf war in parts of Mexico. The Zetas are also reportedly seeking to control the lucrative trafficking corridor through northern Guatemala from local groups, seizing rural farms to use as depots for drugs and weapons. A spike in violence prompted the

Guatemalan government last December to declare a month-long "state of siege" in the northern department of Alta Verapaz.

Guatemala already has one of the highest murder rates in Latin America, an average of 18 per day. The high numbers of homicides and systemic failure of the judicial system in a country where 98 percent of crimes go unpunished led the United Nations to create the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which began operations in late 2007.

Guatemala's violence still pales, however, in comparison with brutal massacres seen in Mexico's drug war, blamed for some 37,000 deaths since December 2006, when authorities launched a military crackdown on the illegal drug gangs.

DONATE FUNDS

Since 1995, Rights Action has been funding the human rights defense work of organizations in Guatemala that seek justice for the crimes against humanity and genocide of the recent past and to build a real democracy and rule of law in Guatemala.

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CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8
CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: <http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

JOIN A DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA (JULY 3-10, 2011) - "Elections, No Democracy"

Join a Rights Action delegation to Guatemala from July 3 to 10, 2011. This pre-elections delegation will speak with human rights and social movement organizations struggling to create conditions for truly democratic processes, and limit the control organized crime and big business hold over the state through illegal networks of influence.
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