

Rights Action - October 17, 2011

## **Arrest Warrants for Genocide & War Crimes in Guatemala**

### **BELOW:**

1. Update from NISGUA: Arrest Warrants Issued for Military High Command
  2. Article by Grahame Russell: "Today the cup of justice in Guatemala is 1% full: Retired general arrested on charges of genocide & forced disappearances"
- Please re-publish and re-post this information, citing sources
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### **ARREST WARRANTS ISSUED FOR MILITARY HIGH COMMAND**

Dear Friends,

We write you today with the latest news on the incredible, historic events that have unfolded here in Guatemala. On October 11th (2011), authorities issued arrest warrants for former Minister of Defense and former President Oscar Humberto Mejía Víctores, and former military intelligence officials José Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez and Luis Enrique Mendoza García.

The Public Prosecutor seeks to press charges of genocide and crimes against humanity for massacres that occurred between 1982 and 1983 in the Ixil region, during which time all three were members of ex-General Efraín Ríos Montt's military high command. Mendoza Garcia is also a graduate of the School of the Americas.

Rodríguez Sánchez was formally brought up on charges October 13th and sent to a military hospital to evaluate his health condition. His trial is slated to open January 29th. Francisco Palomo, defense lawyer for Ríos Montt, will also represent Rodríguez Sánchez.

Mejía Víctores and Mendoza Garcia have been declared fugitives, after search operations proved fruitless. It is suspected both may have fled the country and the Attorney General's office may formally request international arrest warrants through Interpol.

Hearings in the case against former Army Chief of Staff Hector Mario López Fuentes have continually been delayed since his June arrest. In a hearing scheduled to take place at the military hospital today, the defendant was unconscious and unable to participate.

The Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) and the Center for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH) are plaintiffs in each of these genocide cases. AJR

representative Julia Cortez spoke on behalf of the survivors at each of these proceedings, reiterating the AJR's demand for justice.

For more information and background on the genocide case, please visit our website and our regularly updated blog.

For the first time in Latin American history, national courts will hear genocide cases in-country. We are honored to accompany the courageous survivors and supporters as they fight for justice. Please sign our online petition to support the AJR and CALDH.

Thanks so much for your support through both struggle and victory!

Lara, Bridget, Carrie, Phil, and the GAP accompaniers

Join NISGUA as a human rights accompanier. Application deadline: October 31st, 2011.

Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), 436 14th Street, Suite 409, Oakland, CA 94612; (510) 238.8400, [www.nisgua.org](http://www.nisgua.org)

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**TODAY THE CUP OF JUSTICE IN GUATEMALA IS 1% FULL:  
RETIRED GENERAL ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF GENOCIDE & FORCED  
DISAPPEARANCES**

By Grahame Russell, Rights Action, June 2011

Almost 30 years after the massacres and genocide carried out by the U.S.-backed military regime of Guatemala against its own majority indigenous population (part of the "war on communism"), 11 years after the genocide cases were first filed in Guatemala courts, a former army general has been arrested for his role in genocide, forced disappearances and other crimes against humanity. "Hector Mario Lopez, a retired general, is the highest-ranking former official to be arrested for massacres in the 1980s; he faces charges that include genocide and forced disappearance, which involves crimes in which the victim's body is not found." (New York Times, June 17, 2011)

In Guatemala, the cup of justice is usually 99% empty - today, it is 1% full.

This does not mean the cases will move easily forward. There are many reasons to expect that the proceedings - already delayed over a decade - will get even more difficult. Logically and sadly, more acts of repression may be carried out against people and organizations involved in the genocide, massacre and disappearance cases, from witnesses and survivor-led human rights groups, to legal workers, lawyers and judges.

Still, in one of the most deeply undemocratic countries in the Americas, where the rule of law is dysfunctional at best and corrupted and manipulated by the economic, military and political elites at worst, this is a notable achievement.

In a country characterized by the almost complete impunity with which the elites live and act, the arrest of General Hector Mario Lopez presents a moral and political challenge not only to Guatemala, but also to the "international community". Governments, global companies and investors, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank all have beneficial economic and political dealings with the elites of Guatemala, turning a blind eye to the crimes against humanity of the 1970s, 80s and 90s, ignoring that many of the intellectual authors of the genocide and State repression are members of the government, the dominant political parties and the economic elites - the very people the "international community" does business with.

'Business as usual' benefits from and helps keep Guatemala's chronic impunity in place.

#### PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS OF EX-GENERAL OTTO PEREZ MOLINA

The arrest of General Lopez shines a particular light on the presidential candidacy of Otto Perez Molina, another former general also implicated, as an intellectual and material author, in numerous crimes against humanity. Head of the Partido Patriota, Otto Perez Molina - referred to by many as the candidate of the U.S. embassy - is a front-runner to win the presidential elections in September 2011.

It is a day to salute the courage and dignity of so many Guatemalans, victim-survivors of the genocide and State terrorism of the past, still pursuing justice and trying to build a real democratic country despite on-going impunity and repression.

It is again a day to ask: will the "international community" continue to ignore the war crime skeletons in the closets of many of Guatemala's elites and ignore the impunity with which these powerful sectors live and act, or will the "international community" insist, for the first time really, that justice must be done for the war crimes and genocide of the past and for on-going human rights violations and other political crimes?

Today, the cup of justice is 1% full. The struggle for memory, truth and justice in Guatemala continues. Stay tuned; stay involved.

(Grahame Russell is a non-practising lawyer, author, adjunct professor at the University of Northern British Columbia and, since 1995, co-director of Rights Action ([www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)) that funds and supports community development, environmental justice and human rights projects in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in Chiapas and El Salvador.)

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#### **WHAT TO DO**

Since 1995, Rights Action has been funding and supporting numerous victim and survivor founded human rights organizations in Guatemala: carrying out mass grave exhumations and re-burials; building monuments to truth; pursuing legal cases to see justice done for the material and primarily the intellectual authors of the massacres,

forced disappearances and genocide; denouncing on-going indigenous and human rights violations; and working to re-found the Guatemala society and State and build a real democratic country.

### **TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS**

for indigenous and campesino organizations working for memory, truth and justice, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

### **CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS:**

- In Canada: <https://www.canadahelps.org/DonationDetails.aspx?cookieCheck=true>
- In USA:  
<https://npo.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=488>

DONATIONS OF STOCK: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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### **3 SOLIDARITY DELEGATIONS TO GUATEMALA AND/OR HONDURAS**

Please join a Rights Action education-solidarity delegation to:

1- HONDURAS, JANUARY 6-15, 2012  
"ACCOMPANIMENT AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY DELEGATION"

Sponsored by Alliance for Global Justice, Join AfGJ Coordinator Chuck Kaufman, Karen Spring (long-time Honduras human rights accompanier with Rights Action) and Tanya Kerssen (food policy analyst from Food First). For an application, send an email to [AFGJ@AFGJ.org](mailto:AFGJ@AFGJ.org)

2- HONDURAS & GUATEMALA, JANUARY 1-14, 2012  
"MINING, BIOFUELS & MILITARIZATION: US MILITARY AID & CANADIAN-AMERICAN ECONOMIC INTERESTS"

Sponsored by Rights Action, join Annie Bird (Rights Action co-director). For complete information: [annie@rightsaction.org](mailto:annie@rightsaction.org), 202-680-3002.

3- GUATEMALA, MARCH 10-17, 2012  
"DAMS, MINING & AFRICAN PALM PRODUCTION \* versus \* COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS"

Sponsored by Rights Action, join Grahame Russell (Rights Action co-director). For complete information: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), 860-352-2448

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**SPEAKERS:** Contact us to plan educational presentations in your community, school, place of worship, home ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org))

**DELEGATIONS TO CENTRAL AMERICA:** Form your own group and/ or join one of our educational delegation-seminars to learn first hand about community development, human rights and environmental struggles ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org))

**CREATE YOUR OWN** email and mail lists and re-distribute our information

**RECOMMENDED DAILY NEWS:** [www.democracynow.org /](http://www.democracynow.org/)  
[www.upsidedownworld.org /](http://www.upsidedownworld.org/) [www.dominionpaper.ca](http://www.dominionpaper.ca)

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:** Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"; Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States"; James Loewen's "Lies My Teacher Told Me"; Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine"; Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who"

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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Thank-you, Gracias a la visa

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