

Rights Action – March 9, 2012

GUATEMALA – Mass grave exhumations continue ... Genocide trials continue ...



(Photos sent by FAMDEGUA. March 2012 exhumation at a former Coban military base.)

Below, a communiqué from FAMDEGUA (Family Members of the Disappeared in Guatemala), the FAFG (Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala) and CALDH (Center for Human Rights and Legal Action), concerning the exhumation of a mass grave in Guatemala. Below, also, an article about more delays in the genocide legal trial against former General Efraín Ríos Montt, a trial that began in 2000, for atrocities committed in 1981-1982!

30 years after the worst years of genocide and atrocities, leaving over 250,000 killed and 50,000 disappeared, almost no justice has been done against the intellectual authors of the State repression. General Otto Pérez Molina – also accused of being an intellectual and material author of the genocide and repression - just assumed the presidency!

Rights Action is honored to fund groups like FAMDEGUA and the FAFG that keep on working for truth, memory and justice.

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EXHUMATION AT MILITARY BASE TO INVESTIGATE CRIMES COMMITTED DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Guatemala, March 6, 2012

(Translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gill)



(March 2012 exhumation at a former Cobán military base.)

On February 27, 2012, at the former site of the Cobán Military Base, work began on an exhumation to investigate various crimes committed during the civil war. To date, four graves have been found, one of which contains 24 skeletons. This exhumation is part of investigations being carried out by the Public Ministry to reveal the location of the people who were detained during the massacre of the community of Plan de Sánchez, Rabinal, Baja Verapaz.

Since 2002, relatives of detained and disappeared persons have been denouncing to the Public Ministry of Alta Verapaz that their missing relatives had been taken to the the Cobán Military Base and that after that, they never heard from them again. People from various communities and regions of the country, such as Playa Grande, various villages in Cobán, Guatemala City and other places, have indicated that during the war, when they tried to look for a disappeared family member, they were referred to the Cobán Military Base.

Initially, the Public Ministry did not respond to the denouncement about the Cobán Military Base, but now, in 2012, in the context of the investigations of the Plan de Sánchez massacre, the Human Rights Prosecutor is requesting that the court issue a warrant to begin exhumation at the base.

For the relatives of the thousands of people detained and disappeared during the civil war, the order for exhumation gives a ray of hope that the location of their family members will finally be revealed. It also means that they may find out the truth about what happened to them and as well, identify those responsible for these serious crimes.

What is the identity of the people exhumed at the military base? Why are their remains there? We demand answers to these questions from the State of Guatemala, so that we can understand what happened.

We call on all Guatemalans, who endured the horrors of war and believe that a disappeared family member may be found on this military base, to come to the site of the investigation and provide a sample that can be used for DNA testing to establish the identity of the remains that have been exhumed.

We insist that authorities in charge of the site of the former Cobán military base, (now paradoxically used by the Regional Command of the Militares ProPaz), help facilitate

operations for this exhumation and provide information required by the Public Ministry to clarify facts. Failure to do so will incur criminal responsibility.

We demand that the Guatemalan justice system continue prosecuting the serious crimes committed during the civil war in our country, using the strict letter of the law, respecting international norms and human rights stipulations that have been ratified by the State; as such, the justice system should not be intimidated by structures that favour impunity and let criminals go without punishment.

The Only Road to Reconciliation is the Road of Truth and Justice

Familiares de víctimas desaparecidas de Cobán y otras regiones
Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos de Guatemala – FAMDEGUA
Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos – CALDH
Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala – FAFG

GUATEMALA JUDGE STEPS DOWN IN EX-DICTATOR'S GENOCIDE CASE, CITING REMOVAL REQUEST BY DEFENSE

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/americas/guatemala-judge-steps-down-in-ex-dictators-genocide-case-citing-removal-request-by-defense/2012/02/21/gIQAV2apRR_story.html

By Associated Press, February 21, 2012

GUATEMALA CITY — A Guatemalan judge overseeing the genocide case of former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt stepped down Tuesday, accepting a defense request. Judge Carol Patricia Flores made the announcement just before a hearing at which she was to decide whether to drop charges against Ríos Montt because of an amnesty law.

The removal stemmed from a complaint filed in November by defense lawyers of a general also involved in the case who accused the judge of being biased. Ríos Montt ruled Guatemala in 1982-83 after a military coup. He is accused in 1,771 deaths, 1,400 human rights violations and the displacement of 29,000 indigenous Guatemalans.

New judge Miguel Ángel Galvez postponed Tuesday's hearing until March. Galvez said the decisions that Flores already made, such as charging Ríos Montt with genocide and crimes against humanity, remain in place.

The defense lawyer for Ríos Montt complained in late January that Flores violated due process by charging the former dictator before hearing his testimony. Ríos Montt was supposed to testify in a hearing but refused to respond to questions.

It's the first time a Latin American court has charged a former president with genocide.

The case also involves retired generals Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez and Hector Mario López Fuentes, the army chief of staff under Ríos Montt. Both men are in their 80s and contend poor health has kept them from court proceedings.

The defense request that Flores step down was filed by a lawyer for López Fuentes.

WHAT TO DO

HONDURAS DELEGATION, MAY 19-28, 2012

"The Coup vs. Democracy: Struggle of the Popular Movements"

Write to: afgj@afgj.org

GUATEMALA DELEGATION, JULY 7-15, 2012

"Community well-being, human rights & the environment * versus * mining companies that
moil for gold (silver & nickel)"

Write to: info@rightsaction.org

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CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

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