

Rights Action – August 26, 2012

GUATEMALA – GENOCIDE TRIALS CONTINUE COURAGEOUSLY, 30 YEARS LATER ...

In January 2012, one ‘Genocide’ General – Otto Perez Molina – assumed the Presidency in Guatemala, immune from any pending war crimes charges against him for being an intellectual author of genocide and other war crimes committed in the 1980s and 1990s.

At that time, another ‘Genocide’ General – Efraín Ríos Montt – lost his immunity from prosecution, after being one of the most powerful politicians in Guatemala since 1996.

BELOW: An update, from NISGUA, about genocide charges that Ríos Montt is facing in Guatemala.

“INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY” BUSINESS AS USUAL

Notwithstanding the pending genocide charges and allegations against Ríos Montt and Perez Molina, other governments (notably the USA and Canada) and international businesses and investors have maintained fruitful political and economic relations with the previous governments dominated by Efraín Ríos Montt and his FRG party, and now with the government of Otto Perez Molina.

These “business as usual” partnerships reinforce the impunity with which Guatemalan economic, military and political elites operate, and “business as usual” sends a clear message to the people of Guatemala, including the surviving family members and loved ones of the genocide and repression of the recent past, that the “international community” prioritizes its own political and economic interests ahead of the urgent need for truth, memory and real justice in Guatemala.

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WHAT TO DO: See below

HEARING IN GENOCIDE CASE, SURVIVORS GATHER BY THE HUNDREDS

August 22, 2012

<http://nisgua.blogspot.com/2012/08/hearing-in-genocide-case-survivors.html>

“This struggle is everyone’s struggle and the struggle of those that have not yet been born.”
-- Board member for the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR)

The genocide cases have moved forward against former General and de facto President Efraín Ríos Montt and two officials under his command, retired General and former Army Chief of Staff Hector Mario López Fuentes and José Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez, former Director of Military Intelligence.

On Monday, August 21st, legal proceedings began to resolve 13 procedural issues pending in the genocide case. Once resolved, Judge Ángel Gálvez has the power to decide if the genocide trial officially opens against Ríos Montt, López Fuentes and Rodríguez Sánchez.

The court resolved eight procedural issues during the course of the proceedings, until the hearing was suspended this morning after lawyers for Rodríguez Sánchez filed a motion to recuse the current judge. The prosecution has two days to respond to the motion, at which point the judge will prepare a written ruling.

Legal proceedings against Ríos Montt, Rodríguez Sánchez and López Fuentes will continue to be broadcast live online (in Spanish) as they happen at paraqueseconozca.blogspot.com. NISGUA will also continue to broadcast updates in English during transmissions; receive up to the minute updates by liking our Facebook page or following us on Twitter.

At the start of proceedings in Guatemala City on Monday, hundreds of people from rural communities affected by genocide gathered to witness Ríos Montt and members of his high command face justice in the courts of Guatemala. A Maya ceremony took place in the plaza outside the courtroom, with the participation of people from the five regions of the AJR (Association for Justice and Reconciliation), which include Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, Ixcán, Ixil and Rabinal. They were joined by community members from Choatulum, San Juan Sacatepéquez and Suchitepéquez. A woman from the AJR membership shared that during the ceremony, "I felt the spirit of my assassinated father giving me strength to keep going in this struggle." She later added, "I hear my father's voice saying, 'Today is the day that you speak for me.'"

The gathering continued on Tuesday and this morning. People shared music and testimonies, greetings and companionship as they waited for the outcome of the hearing. An estimated 150 people from different parts of Guatemala watched proceedings remotely.

Issues of discrimination were rampant during the first day of the hearings. Supporters of the accused were seated in the courtroom before lawyers and other observers were allowed entry. In the afternoon, members of the AJR were denied access to the courtroom and told it was full. Lawyers inside the courtroom confirmed there was ample space available and took the matter up with Judge Ángel Gálvez, who ordered an inquiry into whether an official order was given to the police not to allow people in.

Despite these challenges, when asked about the mood of the AJR a member responded, "We are in high spirits. We know we are continuing a struggle on behalf of history, on behalf of our children and grandchildren."

With today's news about the suspension of the hearings, the mood of the survivors remains determined. During a meeting following the judge's decision to suspend the hearing, members shared their thoughts. "This has been happening for 500 years. As long as there is injustice in Guatemala, there will be resistance." "We survived for 15 years in the CPRs (Communities of Population in Resistance) and now we are here in the capital. We will not grow faint of heart." "We are grateful to the struggle you [elders] started before us. We didn't see it [the violence], we didn't live it, but we feel it. ...We are ready to fight." "I don't think there is anyone here who has lost their motivation." "This struggle is everyone's struggle and the struggle of those that have not yet been born." One after the other, members of the AJR recommitted to the search for justice.

[NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala) has provided international accompaniment to the AJR board and members for over 12 years through the ACOGUATE project. Stay tuned to NISGUA's blog, Facebook and Twitter for new developments. International human rights observers are needed! Find out more about becoming an accompanier in Guatemala. www.nisgua.org / nisgua.blogspot.com]

WHAT TO DO

The struggle for truth, memory and real justice will continue in Guatemala, even as the likelihood of repression increases.

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

for indigenous and campesino organizations working for community-controlled development, environmental justice, human rights & justice in Guatemala, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

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

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS can be made (in Canada and U.S.):

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- To donate stock, contact: info@rightsaction.org

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DAILY NEWS: www.democracynow.org / <http://therealnews.com/t2/> /

www.upsidedownworld.org / www.dominionpaper.ca /

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"

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