

Courageous, Maya Achi-led struggle: Justice for Rancho Bejuco massacre

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/justice-for-rancho-bejuco-massacre>

41 years later, Maya Achi people are trying to use the corrupted Guatemalan legal system to seek justice for 1982 Rancho Bejuco massacre committed by the U.S.-and western-backed military regime, as Guatemala is ruled repressively today by U.S. and western-backed 'Covenant of the Corrupt' regime.



The Rancho Bejuco massacre is an example of genocidal Guatemalan regime repression that was aimed at elimination of Maya Achi people

We demand justice for Rancho Bejuco massacre

June 7, 2023, Asociación Bufete Jurídico Popular (ABJP)

Guatemala, June 7, 2023, Rabinal. The families of the victims and social organizations demand justice for the massacre of 25 people in the community of Rancho Bejuco, El Chol, Baja Verapaz, which occurred in 1982 during the U.S.-backed military dictatorship of Efraín Ríos Montt.

Today, the trial will begin against nine military and paramilitary personnel who participated in the Rancho Bejuco massacre. The accused are charged with being responsible for torturing and burning alive 25 people, including 17 children of the Maya Achi people, under the pretext that the men did not want to join the Civil Self-Defense Patrols (PAC).

The few survivors denounced the events in the 1990s and have waited almost 30 years for justice to be done, despite the fact that the State has the obligation to investigate and judge grave human rights violations that occurred during the decades of State massacres, genocide repression against the general population.

We social organizations stand in solidarity with the families of the victims and plaintiffs in the Rancho Bejuco case, and call on the High Risk Court D to guarantee a fair, independent and impartial trial.

In addition, we call on human rights, women's and indigenous peoples' organizations, as well as the general population, to support the struggles of the victims' families, and to demand that these atrocities do not go unpunished or be repeated.

- Asociación Bufete Jurídico Popular de Rabinal (Popular Law Firm of Rabinal)
- Survivors of the Achi Women for Justice Case

Background

The Rancho Bejuco massacre illustrates the viciousness of the Guatemalan regime against the Maya Achi people during the internal armed conflict and

the brutality of the "counterinsurgency" scorched earth policy implemented during the time of former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt (1982-1983).

The case constitutes a crime against humanity. Most of the victims were children. Methods of extreme violence were used to eliminate the entire community.

Facts

On the morning of July 29, 1982, a patrol of soldiers, two military commissioners and 15 civilian self-defense patrol members (PAC) from the Pacoc village arrived at the Rancho Bejuco hamlet; they gathered the women, men and minors and locked them in a local house.

Meanwhile, they took Tiburcio Ixpatá Chajaj aside, locked him in a corral, tortured him and killed him mercilessly.

In the afternoon of the same day, the soldiers killed the families by throwing explosives into the house where they were locked up; then they moved their bodies to a pit dug by the PAC.

The report of the United Nations Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) refers to the Rancho Bejuco massacre as an example of the systematic persecution aimed at the total elimination of Achi communities; the report mentions that the Xesiguán community fled to Pacoc "where shortly thereafter they were massacred".

Paulina Ixpatá Alvarado, one of the 36 survivors of the Achi Women Case, is also a survivor of the Rancho Bejuco massacre. She recalls: "That day I was able to save myself because I went shopping in the plaza."

The Achi Women Case reached sentencing in January 2022 against five exPAC. It was found that sexual violence was used as a weapon of war during the decades State massacres, genocide repression against the general population; that it was a particularly serious practice in Rabinal, where the military raped Achi women in their homes, in the local military outpost, in a patrol camp and in public places.

Many of these women were also forced to cook and perform domestic services for the soldiers, under threat of being killed. Through these practices of terror, the Army sought to subject the indigenous women and their communities to military control.

Paulina explains that she traveled with her parents to the town of Rabinal to go shopping because it was market day. "At five o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at the house we had in Rancho Bejuco. We found the door open and there was no one inside. At that moment I thought that my relatives had hidden, I did not imagine that something bad had happened. Since they were only lending us the land to plant corn and beans, we decided to return to our house in Xesiguán".

Victims

All of the victims were members of the Maya Achi people of Rabinal. The families lived in the Xesiguán village and owned or leased farmland in the Rancho Bejuco hamlet, so they moved to the latter to escape military repression in their home community.

The Public Prosecutor's Office presented evidence on the murder of 25 people: 17 minors (7 girls between 8 months-17 years old, and 10 boys between 11 months-15 years old); 8 adults (5 women between 23-52 years old, and 3 men between 20-52 years old).

More information

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