

GHRC Expresses Support for the Community of Rio Negro

The Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA expresses support for the survivors of the community of Rio Negro. After 30 years, their bravery and dedication to justice have brought them to San Jose, Costa Rica to present their case before the Inter American Court on Human Rights.

In his eloquent words, which started off the second day of the trial, Attorney Edgar Perez asked, “How can it be that a State reaches this extreme of not respecting human life?”

Throughout the trial, the surviving victims, the witnesses and the experts on the case described the brutal violence which the community of Rio Negro lived through. From 1980-82, they suffered five massacres which left 444 men, women and children dead. The women were raped, and seventeen children were abducted and forced to work in slave like conditions for the Civil Patrollers who had assassinated their families. The fertile land of the community was flooded as part of the construction of the Chixoy hydroelectric dam and the survivors identified by the government were relocated to a “model village” under the surveillance of the military.

“Today we have an opportunity to create an opening [to reveal] the historical truth that some want to cover and hide. We hope that today you will establish an important precedent, not only for these communities but for all of Guatemala,” Perez told the judges. “Due to the severity of the violations committed [we ask the court] to rule on crimes against humanity and genocide; and that it hand down a strong sentence.”

GHRC expresses profound concern about the posture of the Government of Guatemala, their rejection of the jurisdiction of the Court in this case, and their flagrant lack of respect for the victims and their advocates. We denounce the lack of investigation or capture of the retired Captain José Antonio Solares, who remains a fugitive from justice despite 8 years with a warrant for his arrest for ordering the massacres.

GHRC commends the representatives of the Inter American Commission for their presentation during the trial. We declare our support for the Inter American Court and the important role it plays in safeguarding the essential rights of the citizens of the Americas and pushing forward processes for truth and justice.

*Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA
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