

**OVERCOMING IMPUNITY IN GUATEMALA:
THE "DOS ERRES MASSACRE" GOES TO TRIAL**

Communique # 1 -- May 30, 2000

Dear friends,

Rights Action sends this information concerning another crucial trial that is making its way through the lower courts of Guatemala. Please copy and distribute to interested persons and organizations. Please contact the persons listed below for more information.

Thank-you.

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After more than four frustrating years of attempting to bring the Dos Erres massacre case to trial, FAMDEGUA (Families of the Disappeared in Guatemala) has announced that the case finally got underway on March 17, 2000 in Santa Elena, Peten, the area where the massacre took place.

The Dos Erres massacre is a milestone case in which two former members of a Guatemala Army "Kaibiles" Special Forces unit have given testimony naming officers in the Dec. 6-8, 1982 massacre that wiped out the entire population of the village of Dos Erres.

Because it is testimony by two former military who were eyewitnesses to the massacre, this is a critical case. Never before in Guatemala, has there been firsthand court testimony from former military about mass killings by the Army. Rarely, have Army officials in high positions been called to answer for any military atrocities in Guatemala. Many human rights experts in Guatemala feel that this case will be a very important challenge to the culture of impunity in Guatemala.

On March 17, 2000, after the two witnesses gave their risky testimony before a judge, they had to be escorted immediately to safety in another country, where they have received asylum. Much of the delay in the case had been necessitated by the search for a country to give them asylum. The delegation accompanying them out of Guatemala consisted of FAMDEGUA, the Ministerio Publico in Guatemala, and four international witnesses from the United States.

One accompanier from the U.S. was Will Lotter from Davis, California who, along with his support groups -- the Davis Religious Community for Sanctuary and the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant in Berkeley, CA. -- has been and will continue to be closely involved in this case.

Financial Contributions

At this point, we are not calling for any actions with respect to this case. We will keep you posted with future communiques. To support the work of FAMDEGUA on this Dos Erres court case, please:

1- Make your tax-deductible check out to "East Bay Sanctuary Covenant", noting "FAMDEGUA" on your check, and mail to:

East Bay Sanctuary Covenant
Attn: Will Lotter
2362 Bancroft Way
Berkeley, CA. 94704

2- Or, make your tax-deductible cheque to "Rights Action", and send to the address above.

The Dos Erres trial, with its attorney fees and other costs, has added an enormous financial burden for FAMDEGUA. Rights Action (formerly Guatemala Partners), the Berkeley East Bay Sanctuary Covenant and the Davis Religious Community for Sanctuary feel it is essential that support be generated for the work of FAMDEGUA on this case.

For interviews and further information

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