

GUATEMALA: Bittersweet legal decision in Rio Negro massacre case

I am aware that people act differently in 'groups', of Milgram's experiments, 'they were just following orders' defenses, etc.

I do not like the fact that the poor are always guilty,  
the rich, seldom.

I can't believe it, yet still accept it as historical fact.

The poor men should be forgiven.

The rich should be made to serve some public purpose---oligarchy, WB, IDB, etc.

Putting the poor or rich in prison serves no purpose.

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Rights Action](#)

**To:** '[Rights Action](#)'

**Sent:** Sunday, June 01, 2008 12:54 AM

**Subject:** GUATEMALA: Bittersweet legal decision in Rio Negro massacre case

## **GUATEMALA: Bittersweet legal decision in Rio Negro massacre case**

### **BELOW:**

2 news articles about 5 former Civil Defense Patrollers being sentenced to life in prison for their role in the March 13, 1982 "Rio Negro" massacre. Since 1993, Rights Action has funded and supported Rio Negro massacre survivors in a wide range of projects, including their efforts to have justice done for the massacres and genocide.

In May, Rights Action, in conjunction with the University of Northern British Columbia, led an educational delegation to the isolated community of Rio Negro; we were honored to hike 2 hours above the community, with a massacre survivor, to the very spot of the massacre.

### **BITTERSWEET LEGAL DECISION:**

In a country characterized by the impunity of the wealthy and powerful sectors, one would want to welcome this legal decision.

### **"MATERIAL" versus "INTELLECTUAL" AUTHORS of MASSACRES and GENOCIDE:**

However, the main problem is that the 5 former civil defense patrollers – poor, Mayan men themselves - going to jail for life, are the least of the guilty parties. They were forced to participate in the massacre by soldiers and Army lieutenants; the soldiers and Lieutenants were following orders given by their ranking officers, all the way up the generals.

An eyewitness to and survivor of the Rio Negro massacre, now living in Pacux, Rabianl, said he would prefer that these men not go to jail, as they were following orders. Meanwhile the ranking officer Colonel Solares, who ordered this massacre and who is named in this case, has not been detained or tried; neither have any soldiers.

Furthermore, this decision will be used, by some, to pretend that the rule of law is functioning in Guatemala. The opposite is true. Today, the most powerful members of the oligarchy and military, that planned and directed the genocide and State terrorism of the recent past, live happy and free lives – occupying the highest positions of power in the country.

### **WORLD BANK & INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK CONNECTION:**

In the same way that the "intellectual authors" of the Rio Negro massacre have gotten off scott-free, so have the World Bank (WB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Though both articles, below, mention "the dam", neither mention that the Chixoy river hydro-electric dam was a project of the WB and IDB carried out in conjunction with the military regime that was carrying out genocide against Mayan peoples. To this day,

neither the WB nor the IDB have paid compensation or reparations for the massacres and forced evictions caused by their Chixoy Dam Hydro-Electric Project.

If you want on-off this elist: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org). **WHAT TO DO:** see below.

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## **PARAMILITARIES SENTENCED FOR CHIXOY DAM MASSACRES**

[http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5jYKvAmWqeJoZ2nS\\_hsVqGbWNxGGgD90VI58O0](http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5jYKvAmWqeJoZ2nS_hsVqGbWNxGGgD90VI58O0)

By JUAN CARLOS LLORCA

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) Five former paramilitary members have been sentenced to 780 years each in prison for massacring 26 people during one of the more horrifying incidents in Guatemala's long civil war, a court official said Thursday. The convictions of the five men, former members of peasant militia groups sponsored by the military, follows years of trials and hearings.

Court spokesman Guillermo Melgar said each of the men was given the maximum 30-year sentence for each of the 26 killings. However, sentences in Guatemala are served concurrently, so the men can only serve up to 30 years. Public defender Mynor Pineda said he would appeal the guilty verdicts.

A postwar U.N study reported that a military-backed "self-defense patrol" came to the Achi Mayan Indian hamlet of Rio Negro in March 1982 looking for rebel sympathizers. Rio Negro men who had survived a February massacre of 74 people were hiding in the hills. So the attackers looted the houses, rounded up the women and children and led them up the mountain.

According to the study, many of the women were forced to dance, some were raped, and 70 were slain - often after torture. Killed with them were 107 children. A few children were spared, but forced to serve the patrols as near-slaves, according to victims rights organizations.

The U.N. report noted that the villagers had resisted the military government's plans to build a dam there [the Chixoy dam, a mega-development project of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank] and said soldiers suspected villagers of collaborating with leftist rebels. . . .

The maximum sentences were imposed on Macario Alvarado Toj, Francisco Alvarado Lajuj, Tomas Vino Alvarado, Pablo Ruiz Alvarado and Lucas Lajuj Alvarado, who were based in the village of Xococ, near Rio Negro. . . .

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 BBC NEWS

### **GUATEMALA JAILS FIVE FOR MASSACRE**

A court in Guatemala has sentenced five former paramilitaries each to 780 years in prison for the 1982 murder of 26 indigenous Mayan villagers. They received the maximum sentence of 30 years for each of the murders which took place during an infamous massacre of 177 women and children in Rio Negro. The victims died refusing to move from the site of a new hydroelectric dam.

Guatemala was fighting a civil war at the time in which 200,000 people either died or disappeared.

The five former members of the Civilian Self-Defence Patrols force were also ordered to pay compensation to the relatives of the victims. Their defence is expected to lodge an appeal against the sentences. A sixth defendant in the trial, which began in 2004, was acquitted for lack of evidence. Three paramilitaries were earlier convicted of a role in the massacre while warrants have been issued for three others. Story from BBC NEWS: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/7426800.stm>

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**WHAT TO DO:** [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)

## WHAT IS RIGHTS ACTION?

Based in Guatemala, Rights Action (with tax-deductible legal status in Canada and USA) funds and works with community-based development, environment and human rights organizations in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and southern Mexico (Oaxaca, Chiapas); and educates about and is involved in activism related to global development, environmental and human rights struggles.

**TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS** for indigenous and community-based organizations that are implementing their own development, human rights and environment projects, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to: UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887; CANADA: 422 Parliament St, Box 82552, Toronto ON, M5A 4N8. CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org).

\* **EDUCATIONAL DELEGATION - From July 7-12**, Rights Action is leading an educational delegation to Honduras to learn about community-based resistance to the environmental and economic harms and human rights violations caused by Goldcorp Inc's open pit, cyanide leaching mine; and, to learn about the territorial and human rights struggles of Indigenous/Garifuna peoples. If interested: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org).

\* **2nd Hemispheric Gathering Against Militarization (Americas Social Forum) – HONDURAS, OCTOBER 3-5** [www.antimilitarizacion.blogspot.com](http://www.antimilitarizacion.blogspot.com); [antimilitarizacion@gmail.com](mailto:antimilitarizacion@gmail.com). !Para callar las armas, hablemos los pueblos! (To quiet weapons, the people must speak!). PLACE: La Esperanza, Intibucá, Honduras. For more info: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org).

\* **3rd SOCIAL FORUM OF THE AMERICAS – GUATEMALA, OCTOBER 7-12, 2008** - Form your own group and/ or join a Rights Action delegation to come to Guatemala around the time of the 3rd Social Forum of the Americas. Thousands of people from across the Americas are expected at this gathering to debate and discuss (and enjoy awesome music, art and theater) how Another World Is Possible ... And Necessary. For more info: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org).

JOIN: Rights Action's listserv and newsletter lists.

CREATE YOUR OWN E-MAIL LIST: and re-distribute this and other information.

LISTEN: to the [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org) news program every day.

READ: Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"; Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine"; Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed".

SMILE: And live to make another world is possible, everyday.

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