

Elections In Guatemala (September 11) Demonstrate A Failure In Guatemala's 20 Year "Transition To Democracy" A Genocide General Is Poised To Win The Presidential Elections

Rights Action statement

The impending election of an alleged intellectual and material author of Guatemala's genocide as president demonstrates the failure of democracy to take root in Guatemala, and a failure of the rule of law in Guatemala and internationally in important ways.

[BACKGROUND: A letter was submitted to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture calling for an investigation into the role that Guatemalan presidential candidate ex-General Otto Perez Molina played in the commission of genocide, torture and disappearances in Guatemala during the worst years of State repression and terrorism in the 1980s:

http://rightsaction.org/articles/Letter_to_United_Nations_082411.html]

As neighboring Honduras is reeling under systemic State repression by the military-backed government of Pepe Lobo, ever since the June 2009 military coup – this repression including the re-emergence of death squads -, former General Otto Perez Molina is poised to become president of Guatemala.

This is a dismal scenario for the people of Guatemala (and Honduras).

- Then-General Otto Perez Molina commanded the Nebaj, Quiche military base in 1982 and 1983. Nebaj was the epicenter of more than 300 massacres the Guatemalan army planned and carried out in the department of Quiche that, in the Nebaj Mayan Ixil region, constituted genocide.
- A film recorded by journalists in September 1982 shows Perez Molina standing over four tortured men who had been executed. A leaked military document, Operacion Sofia, records

Perez Molina's direct participation and command of a military operation from July 16 to July 30, 1982, in Nebaj and Aguacatan, Huehuetenango, which began with the July 17, 1982 massacre and torture 15 people including 9 children in village in Aguacatan.

- Declassified United States government documents reveal that in 1993, when the Army's "G-2" military intelligence unit was under Perez Molina's command, the G-2 ran a secret program of kidnapping and illegal detentions (in clandestine jails), and long-term torture, with over 300 prisoners.
- In 1993, the G-2 was suspected in the assassination of a judge who was investigating the military that was suspected of planning and carrying out murders in Chimaltenango and Quiche.
- A journalist reported that Perez Molina was outside the San Sebastian church, in Zone 1, Guatemala City, the night of the brutal assassination of Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi in April 1998.

WATCH -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdV1WJJEfHE&feature=email> - a Democracy Now interview with the author and investigator Francisco Goldman about how Perez Molina is accused of being one of the intellectual authors of the 1998 assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi.

- A journalist has reported that while head of the G-2, Perez Molina was on the payroll of the US government's Central Intelligence Agency.
- Documents, released by Wikileaks, demonstrate that Perez Molina has been one of the most constant contacts of the US embassy in Guatemala. Many in Guatemala refer to Perez Molina as the "US candidate".
- Documents, released by Wikileaks in August, describes Perez Molina admitting that members of his Partido Patriota party opened communication with drug traffickers during his 2007 presidential campaign. Not discussed in this released cable was that a good number of people involved in the Partido Patriota, and close to Perez Molina, are also implicated in organized crime activities.

THE PURPOSE AND GOAL OF STATE REPRESSION AND GENOCIDE

In Guatemala, the widespread State repression (including genocide and other crimes against humanity in the 1970s, 80s and early 90s) was used as a calculated tool to gain and maintain political-economic-military control of the nation, to keep in place a very unjust, exploitative economic-development model.

When war criminals are allowed to gain control of the nation, using state repression over the course of years, and who have direct or indirect links to organized crime, it should not be surprising that the political system and State they create and control is founded neither on democratic principles, procedures and checks and balances, nor on the fair and impartial application of the rule of law.

Rather, the political system and State are dependent on the arbitrary and systemic application of State repression against the poor majority, while keeping in place political, legal and military structures of impunity for the powerful sectors.

THE “PEACE ACCORDS” FAILED

Fifteen years after the signing of the 1996 “peace accords”, and some 30 years after the very worst years of State repression and genocide (1978-1983), Guatemala suffers one of the highest murder rates in the world, while the indices of poverty and exploitation and over-arching racism have not been reduced.

Though the daily killings are the most visible sign of a corrupted political system, there are less obvious yet equally devastating indications of the corrupted State and lack of democracy and rule of law - from illegal and violent land-grabs by the wealthy and powerful sectors (with the use of State security forces in violent and illegal evictions), to the manipulation and corruption of the administration of justice by the so-called “parallel networks” of the powerful sectors in Guatemala, that are linked to organized crime.

SYSTEM OF MULTIPLE EXCLUSIONS

Rather than generating an open, democratic society with broad participation, all of this generates and reinforces the historically entrenched “system of multiple exclusions.”

The September 11 elections are occurring in a harsh and yet normal context of violence, enforced poverty and impunity, with no respect for and defense of basic human rights (including the right to life, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, security, access to justice, freedom from servitude, amongst many more) that constitute the fundamental principles upon which any democratic society is built.

The Guatemalan elections, in general, hold no hope for any significant change to the deeply entrenched “system of multiple exclusions”.

THE EMPEROR WEARS NO CLOTHES

If and when Perez Molina wins these elections, this will simply and most harshly demonstrate, for all to see, and for Guatemalans to fear, how little Guatemala has actually changed, that the “bad guys” won the “cold war” battles of the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s, and that Guatemala remains a country fundamentally dominated by the military and ex-military, now very linked to and intertwined with both the historic economic elites and most recently sectors of the narco-trafficking industry.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

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