

No More Impunity: Justice for the Maya Ixil People and the Genocide Trial Against Lucas García

December 10, 2024

We stand in solidarity with the Maya Ixil survivors and victims of genocide and crimes against humanity committed in Guatemala.

In light of the recent resolution by the First Chamber of the High-Risk Court of Appeals of Guatemala, we affirm our unwavering solidarity with the Maya Ixil communities, the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) and the Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG) as they continue in their decades-long fight for justice against the intellectual architects of genocide in Guatemala. The courageous pursuit of accountability for crimes committed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict is a testament to the resilience of the survivors, their unwavering stand against impunity, and their commitment to preserving the historic memory of those who were martyred and lost.

We call on groups, organizations and individuals committed to justice and human rights to stand in solidarity with the Maya Ixil people. Join us in solidarity with survivors and victims as we continue to mobilize support to hold the judicial system and the government of Guatemala accountable.

We join the AJR and ODHAG in rejecting the illegal, unjust, and disgraceful resolution issued by the First Chamber of the High-Risk Court of Appeals. This **baseless ruling, issued on November 28, 2024** by magistrates Marco Tulio Pérez Lemus, Jorge Emilio Morales Quezada, and Miriam Regina Brolo Salazar, accepted the spurious and false arguments presented by the Public Defense in favor of retired General Manuel Benedicto Lucas García. Their decision, clearly aimed at benefiting the accused and guaranteeing his impunity, orders the suspension of the final phase of the genocide trial, halting the issuance of a long-awaited sentence. This resolution is a grave violation of the rights of the Maya Ixil victims and survivors, who have endured decades of injustice.

Despite the **overwhelming evidence presented during the 95 hearings of the trial**, which includes over **120 testimonies and documentation of 19 massacres**, justice has been shamefully delayed. The trial against retired General Manuel Benedicto Lucas García, former Chief of the Army General Staff, has been marked by repeated delays and systemic efforts to obstruct accountability and justice. **These delays came to their height on November 13, 2024 when an injunction filed by the defense resulted in the suspension of the sentencing proceedings.** This tactic, emblematic of impunity, threatens to derail the trial, potentially returning it to the intermediate stage and denying survivors justice.

We **condemn all efforts by the defense of retired General Lucas García to obstruct justice** through baseless legal maneuvers. These efforts reveal the entrenched corruption and impunity within Guatemala's judicial system, which continues to deny survivors the justice they rightfully deserve. Similar malicious legal strategies have been used in high-profile cases, such as the annulment of the 2013 genocide conviction of retired General Efraín Ríos Montt and the delays in the trial of retired General Héctor Mario López Fuentes, highlighting a pattern of obstruction to protect military officials facing charges of genocide and crimes against humanity from accountability and justice.

Obstruction is not an isolated incident; it is part of a larger and constant pattern of corruption. **On December 2, prosecutor Mercedes Morales Santos, who called for a historic sentence of 2,860 years for Lucas García was removed from the case.**

As the AJR and the Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG) powerfully stated in their November 28 press release:

“The magistrates of the First Chamber of Appeals, with proven links to corrupt and impunity-driven actors... have issued a baseless resolution aimed at directly benefiting the accused... gravely violating the rights of the victims.”

The survivors of the **AJR—representing 22 communities** devastated by the military’s scorched earth campaign between 1978 and 1985—continue to demonstrate remarkable bravery and strength throughout the decades in their quest for justice. **They have endured intimidation, threats, and legal obstruction.** As their press release emphasizes:

“We have won a trial against one of the most bloodthirsty generals Latin American history has ever known, and fear of the sentence made them seek help from corrupt actors to ensure impunity.”

We echo their determination: **“We will not stop until justice is served.”** The Maya Ixil people continue to face significant risks in their pursuit of justice. Their resistance confronts systemic impunity, entrenched corruption, and **deep-seated racism that continue to threaten Indigenous communities across Guatemala.**

We call on the **government of Guatemala to respect due process** and allow the court to proceed accordingly. We denounce the decision of the Court of Appeals, **This is a blatant obstruction of justice must not stand.** The High-Risk Court A must be allowed to proceed with sentencing without interference. **We demand that the Constitutional Court of Guatemala ensure the independence of the judiciary and uphold the survivors' right to a fair and expeditious trial.** There must be accountability for those who obstruct justice through corrupt practices, including magistrates and officials complicit in perpetuating impunity.

We call on the international community, human rights organizations, and allies to:

- **Denounce this obstruction of justice in Guatemala and call for an end to systemic impunity.**
- **Support Maya Ixil victims, survivors and the AJR in their decades-long fight for accountability and historical memory.**
- **Strongly urge the government of Guatemala to protect prosecutors, judges, and human rights defenders from retaliation or removal in high profile cases.**
- **High-Risk Court A must be allowed to proceed with sentencing. Justice must prevail for the victims of genocide, forced disappearances, and crimes against humanity.**

To the Maya Ixil communities: we commit to continue to accompany and support all avenues in the pursuit of justice. We are grateful for your resistance and honor your work. We stand with you in your fight for truth, justice, and reconciliation. Your courage and resistance inspire movements for justice and human rights across the Americas and the world.

¡Si hubo genocidio!

- Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)
- Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA)
- Interreligious Task Force on Latin America, Cleveland, Ohio (IRTF)
- Organization in Solidarity with the Guatemalan People, Chicago (OSGua)
- Latin America Solidarity Committee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Latin America Task Force of Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- The Friendship Office of the Americas, Greenbelt, Maryland
- Denver Justice & Peace Committee (DJPC)
- Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective, USA
- Calán Institute for Transterritorial Justice (CATRA), Honduras
- Honduras Solidarity Network of North America, USA, Canada
- Colectivo Alma de Izote, Chicago
- La voz de los de Abajo, Chicago
- Global Exchange, San Francisco, California
- Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA
- Alianzas of Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Virginia
- SICSAL– OAR (Servicio Internacional Cristiano de Solidaridad con los pueblos de América Latina – Óscar Arnulfo Romero)
- Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network (BTS), Canada
- Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network (ARSN), Canada
- Providence Associates Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Canada
- Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), USA
- Colectiva Ceiba, Chicago
- Guatemala Solidarity Project
- Guatemalanetz Bern, Switzerland
- Kickapoo Peace Circle
- African Immigration Initiative
- Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
- US - El Salvador Sister Cities
- Nobel Women's Initiative, Canada
- Guatemala Solidarity Network Zurich, Switzerland
- University Church, Chicago