

GUATEMALA: Threats Against CALDH Director Edda Gaviola and Plan de Sánchez Massacre Witnesses Government Apologizes for Massacre New Secret Police Files Discovered

UA 228/04, issued July 21, 2004; threats against CALDH director and Plan de Sanchez massacre victims
RRN letters July 24 2004, August 2 2004

Related cases

UA 28/03: RRN letter March 23 2003; threats against CALDH staff Hector Amilcar Mollinedo Caceros and Mario Moreira;

UA 275/03: RRN letter September 25, 2003; threat against Fernando López, CALDH director

April 29 2004

Inter-American Court on Human Rights (of the Organization of American States) condemned the Guatemalan government for the July 18, 1982 Plan de Sánchez massacre in Baja Verapaz Department, when Guatemalan armed forces killed 268 Achi Mayan people. The court is still to determine how much the government should pay the victims in compensation.

July 24 2004

RRN members wrote to Guatemalan officials urging protection for Edda Gaviola, director of CALDH (Center for Human Rights Legal Action) and witnesses to the Plan de Sanchez massacre. **CALDH has been instrumental in pressing the Guatemalan authorities to prosecute those responsible for the massacres of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s.** Edda Gaviola is CALDH's representative to the coalition promoting the proposed Commission for the Investigation of Illegal Bodies and Clandestine Security Apparatus (CICIAS) and into the increasing killings of women in Guatemala.

Gaviola's home was broken into and threatening messages were left July 14 and 15. On July 16 the CALDH office was broken into. On July 17, a witness to the massacre found a box with a death threat that read, "Happy July 18 Anniversary."

July 18, 2005

Guatemalan Vice-President Eduardo Stein flew to Plan de Sanchez and formally apologized for the massacre. Stein confessed that the army had, "unleashed bloodshed and fire to wipe out an entire community." Despite the apology, the Oscar Berger Administration continues to obstruct efforts to get justice for the communities that suffered the massacres.

New Secret Police Files Discovered

Also in July 2005, a collection of secret police files were discovered that **detailed more cases of human abuses, including illegal detentions, disappearances, summary executions, kidnappings and torture.** The estimated 30,000 files are part of the archives of the now defunct National Police. Guatemala's Human Rights Ombudsman Sergio Morales called the documents "one of the most important discoveries in recent times."