



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 258 - March 2025

1. THE CURRENT SITUATION

Monthly update on the situation in Guatemala as highlighted by the press, related to the main thematic areas of PBI Guatemala's work: the fight against impunity, land issues and defense of territory.

CC grants injunction to military official linked to crimes against humanity in the Military Diary case¹

In March 2025, Guatemala's Constitutional Court (CC) granted an injunction to retired military officer Toribio Acevedo Ramírez, on trial in the "Military Diary" case. This ruling allows Acevedo Ramírez to regain his freedom under alternative measures, after he was arrested in 2022 and charged with murder, forced disappearance and crimes against humanity. At the same time, Jacobo Salán Sánchez, another defendant in the same case, petitioned the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) to dismiss the plaintiffs from the judicial proceedings. The public hearing to consider this petition was rescheduled for April 1, raising concerns among plaintiffs, who believe that this move is an attempt to ensure impunity for the defendants.

Victims' family members and human rights organizations have criticized these decisions as a step backwards for transitional justice in Guatemala. In fact, during sessions of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), lawyer Jovita Tzul condemned the dismantling of institutions responsible for investigating and prosecuting human rights violations, revealing a pattern that favors impunity in cases involving crimes committed during the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC).

Water mismanagement and pollution: a top-priority issue in Guatemala²

Guatemala is facing a serious water crisis due to pollution, deforestation and poor water management. Despite the country's abundant water sources, a lack of regulation and the pollution of rivers and lakes have jeopardized access to drinking water for many communities. In this context, agribusiness, mining and uncontrolled urban growth have intensified pressure on water resources, which mainly affects the most vulnerable groups.

Faced with this issue, various communities are taking the initiative to defend and conserve water. For example, the Xinka people of Casillas have developed projects to protect water sources, while women's groups in Lake Atitlán have organized clean-up days to mitigate pollution. However, these actions contrast with the inaction of many state authorities and companies, who dodge their responsibility for the environmental damage they are causing, which affects the quality and quantity of water available to the population.

In terms of caring for the environment and bearing in mind the obvious relationship between forests and water, it is essential to point out that deforestation is a major threat endangering the country's water supply. Sustainable management of natural resources and effective legislation are essential requirements for avoiding social conflict and guaranteeing equitable access to water. As such, the debate on a Water Law in Guatemala continues to be key to defining the future of the country's environmental and social stability.

¹ Simón Antonio, R., [Denuncian retroceso para juzgar casos del conflicto armado interno ante la CIDH](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 05 Mar 2025.

² Figueroa, K., [«Dicen que el agua viene del chorro, pero... el agua viene de los bosques»](#), Agencia Ocote, 04 March 2025.

8M: Women Demand Justice

In Guatemala, women face a reality marked by violence and impunity. Despite legal advances in this area, the femicide rate remains high and impunity in these cases reaches between 90 and 95%.³ Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable due to factors such as poverty, racial discrimination and lack of access to justice.

Sexual violence against girls is an alarming problem in the country. Between 2018 and 2024, more than 14,000 girls aged 14 and under gave birth as a result of sexual abuse. These girls face significant barriers in accessing health, education and justice services, severely limiting their rights and future opportunities.⁴

The case of the fire at the Virgen de la Asunción “Safe” Home in 2017, in which 41 girls died and 15 survived with serious physical consequences, illustrates the lack of justice and reparations available for the victims of institutional violence. Eight years later, the survivors and their families are still waiting for concrete answers and actions from the State. There is an urgent need for structural reforms in the institutions that are supposed to guarantee protection and respect for the rights of girls and women in Guatemala.

Therefore, on March 8th, International Women's Day, demonstrations were held in different regions of the country. In Guatemala City, the March 8th Coordinating Committee organized a march that started at the Palace of Justice and ended at the Plaza de la Constitución. Hundreds of women and girls participated, carrying banners with messages such as “My life has value” and “Silence makes you an accomplice, speak out and report sexual violence.” Victims’ family members and survivors of violence also joined the march to demand justice.

Judge in the Rubén Zamora case and journalists from elPeriódico persecuted by the MP

The Public Prosecutor's Office (MP), under the leadership of Consuelo Porras, has asked the Constitutional Court to revive criminal investigations against six journalists and two columnists from elPeriódico, who are accused of obstruction of justice due to their publications. This move has caused concern in those sectors that defend freedom of expression in the country.⁵ At the same time, journalist José Rubén Zamora, founder of elPeriódico, was returned to prison on March 10 after the revocation of his house arrest. International organizations have characterized his detention, which began in 2022 on charges of money laundering, as a form of retaliation against his journalistic work.⁶

In addition, the judge in the José Rubén Zamora case, Erick García, spoke out about facing harassment and threats, adding to the ranks of persecuted justice officials in the country. The lack of support from the Supreme Court of Justice exacerbates judges’ vulnerability in a context of growing political pressure on the judicial system.⁷

Obstacles to access to justice reported to the IACHR and the European Parliament

“In a public hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), civil society organizations presented information” highlighting persistent obstacles in the Guatemalan justice system, showing how corruption and impunity negatively affect the victims of serious human rights violations committed during the IAC. In response, the IACHR acknowledged the lack of significant progress in implementing previous recommendations, underscoring the urgent need for concrete measures to improve access to justice and reduce impunity.⁸

Likewise, the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights heard complaints about the dismantling of the Human Rights Prosecutor's Office in Guatemala. Former Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz explained how this dismantling is part of a broader pattern of persecution against victims, prosecutors and justice

³ Alboan, [Ser mujer en Guatemala: entre la resistencia y la injusticia](#), 15 Jan 2025.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, [Guatemala: Failed Response to Sexual Violence Against Girls](#), 18 Feb 2025.

⁵ Prensa Comunitaria, [Ministerio Público pide a la CC que reactive la investigación contra periodistas y columnistas](#), 20 Mar 2025.

⁶ Aguilar, D., [Condena internacional por el regreso a prisión de Jose Rubén Zamora](#), elPeriodico, 11 Mar 2025.

⁷ Prensa Comunitaria, [Erick García se suma a la lista de jueces hostigados y amenazados](#), 11 Mar 2025.

⁸ CEJIL, [Guatemala: CIDH reconoce obstáculos en el acceso a la justicia e impunidad para víctimas de graves violaciones a derechos humanos](#), 04 Mar 2025.

officials involved in transitional justice cases, which further exacerbates the human rights situation in the country.⁹

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS¹⁰

PBI accompanies social organizations and individuals who have received threats for their work in the defence and promotion of human rights. In this context we are accompanying social processes in the fight against impunity, land inequality and defense of territory.¹¹

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

This month, as part of the thematic focus “Struggle against impunity”, we accompanied:

- The **Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared of Guatemala (FAMDEGUA)** to a public hearing on the Military Diary case in the CSJ's Court of Injunctions and Pre-Trial Motions. This hearing was suspended because the lawyer for the accused, Salán Sánchez, Eddy Rolando Herrera, could not attend. Victims' family members and the organizations that support them spoke out, saying that this decision has no legal or technical justification and is part of a strategy of attrition, designed to ensure that the Guatemalan justice system upholds impunity.
- The family of **Luz Leticia** to the first of two hearings scheduled to present evidence. The hearing ended up being canceled because of a missing case file, even though, in past hearings, the family's lawyer had requested that the session be held using a copy of the file.



DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

We continue to hold our regular meetings with organizations that defend access to land in Alta Verapaz:

- The **Verapaz Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)** to a hearing following up on the Finca La Primavera case in San Cristóbal Verapaz. We also met with several UVOC members to get an update on the work the organization is doing and their security situation.
- We accompanied the **Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA) - Verapaces Region** to a hearing for Mario René Coc in the trial court of Cobán. Coc is accused of robbery, damage and assault in relation to incidents that occurred during the eviction from the Chicoy plantation, near the village of Las Pacayas. The CCDA believes the charges are a form of criminalization for his work defending land rights. Furthermore, on March 24th, we responded to an emergency involving the possible eviction of CCDA member community, Tierra Nueva, located in San Pedro Carchá. The community was the target of an eviction attempt by civil forces, when National Civil Police (PNC) agents showed up to serve an eviction notice. The community is involved in talks with the Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH) to resolve the ongoing conflict with the Federation of Cooperatives of the Verapaces (FEDECOVERA).

⁹ Prensa Comunitaria, [Claudia Paz y Paz denunció un patrón de criminalización](#), 19 Mar 2025.

¹⁰ We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

¹¹ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND



On March 4th, in the department of Guatemala, we visited the encampment of the **Peaceful Resistance of the Poqomam People of Chinautla**, who are defending their territory from the pollution of the Las Vacas River and the sand companies that are operating without free, prior and informed consultation.

We visited the **Council of Communities of Retalhuleu (CCR)** on the South Coast during activities they held to celebrate World Water Day, highlighting their struggle for water.

3. POLITICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Meetings and other contact with the diplomatic bodies, international organisations and Guatemalan authorities.

Meetings with national and international authorities are an important way for PBI to make known what we do and what our objectives are. Through these meetings, where necessary and in a reserved manner, we share our concerns about worrying situations that we have witnessed first-hand from the work we do in the field.

With respect to our dialogue with the diplomatic corps, this month we met with:

- Sebastián Osorio Bunster, head of the chancellery and consul of the **Embassy of Chile**.
- Alawi Kabariti, head of the Central America team at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and Isabel MacDonald, human rights officer at the **British Embassy**, at an embassy meeting on forced evictions in Alta Verapaz. Sandra Calel, a UVOC representative accompanied by PBI, participated in the meeting to share her experience of the organization's work.
- Mónica Velarde Méndez, head of the chancellery, Linda Jazmín Amezcua Orellana, head of political affairs, Linda Marina Dolores Munive and Miguel Ángel López Rojas from the **Embassy of Mexico**.
- Mónica Izaguirre, political and economic officer and press secretary, and Caroline Amyot Michaud, policy advisor at the **Embassy of Canada**.

With respect to our dialogue with Guatemalan authorities, this month we met with Yolanda Pérez and Marisol Zea, director and deputy director of **COPADEFH National**.

4. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA OUTSIDE GUATEMALA

Outside the country we constantly develop and strengthen the network of support for the Guatemalan PBI project, as this is one of the essential tools necessary to protect defenders of human rights. Regional Representatives, the Project Office Coordinator and other members of the committee and the Project Office and national groups of PBI, conduct public relations campaigns with many NGOs, agencies and national governments, parliamentarians and others. In this context we develop actions and public relations campaigns, and / or advocacy aimed at protecting defenders of human rights.

This month, the project's European Representative met with:

- Désirée Herman, Sweden's representative in the working groups of the **EU Council on Latin America and the Caribbean (COLAC)** and the **working party on Human Rights (COHOM)**.
- Karolien Kras, Guatemala desk of the **European External Action Service (EEAS)**.
- **Representatives from Luxembourg, Ireland, Germany, Sweden and Italy and COLAC chair Tomás Ortego**, as part of a tour featuring Guatemalan human rights defenders.

5. INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION

PBI Guatemala is present in international public events when requested to do so by Guatemalan social organisations, in order to show international attention and interest and in order to report internationally on what we observe.

This month we observed the **March 8 International Women's Day March**, where different groups voiced their rejection and condemnation of hatred, discrimination, persecution, violence and decisions that violate the human rights of girls, adolescents, women and LGBTIQ+ people. They also demanded respect for their right to education, decent working conditions, health, access to justice and safety, among others.

The march ended in the Plaza de la Niñas where they held a ceremony to commemorate the violent deaths of 41 girls and teenagers, as well as the 15 who were injured in the fire at the Virgen de la Asunción "Safe" Home eight years ago.



6. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

From March 11 to 12, we organized the logistics for a **healing gathering facilitated by the TZ'KAT Network of Ancestral Healers** of Territorial Community Feminism from Iximulew. Women defenders of historical memory, land and territory from different organizations and regions across the country participated. The gathering took place in the municipality of Ixcán, department of Quiché.

7. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In this section we publish statements (some abbreviated) from human rights organisations in which they express their concerns regarding recent events.



CAFCA - CALDH - CIIIDH - ODHAG - UDEFEGUA - ECAP - ICCPG - SEDEM - UNAMG

REPUDIAMOS EL DESALOJO DE LAS FAMILIAS Q´EQCHIS DE LA COMUNIDAD RIO TEBERNAL, LIVINGSTON, IZABAL, ASÍ COMO EL ATAQUE ARMADO CONTRA VARIOS COMUNITARIOS

El 5 de marzo del presente año, familias Q´eqchis de la comunidad Río Tebernal, en Livingston, fueron desalojadas sin que se respetaran sus derechos garantizados por la Constitución Política de Guatemala, así como en convenios y tratados internacionales. Además, no se aplicaron los protocolos de actuación que garantizan el respeto de los derechos humanos en este tipo de procedimientos.

Ante estos hechos, la Convergencia por los Derechos Humanos:

- Reitera una vez más que las comunidades y los pueblos originarios tienen derecho a su tierra ancestral y que la exigencia de este derecho no debe ser criminalizada. Y se solidariza con las familias Q´eqchis desalojadas de la comunidad Río Tebernal, quienes afrontan una crisis humanitaria que ponen en riesgo la seguridad y vida, especialmente la de personas en condiciones de vulnerabilidad.
- Exige a las autoridades investigar con prontitud el ataque armado en contra de personas de la comunidad Río Tebernal, en el que una persona resultó herida.
- Manifiesta su preocupación ante el incremento de desalojos de familias indígenas y campesinas durante el primer año de gobierno de Bernardo Arévalo, así como por el incumplimiento de los protocolos de actuación por parte de la fuerza pública estatal en estos procedimientos, lo que vulnera los derechos humanos.
- Demanda al Estado de Guatemala que cumpla con los convenios y tratados internacionales, así como con los protocolos de actuación que garanticen el respeto de los derechos humanos en las acciones de desalojos, asegurando el acceso a albergue temporal, seguridad alimentaria, salud y educación para las familias afectadas.
- Urge al gobierno de Bernardo Arévalo a implementar acciones eficaces e inmediatas para atender la conflictividad agraria relativa a la tierra y coordinar medidas para enfrentar la crisis humanitaria que viven las familias desalojadas.
- Hace un llamado a organizaciones nacionales e internacionales, colectivos y comunidades a brindar apoyo a las familias desalojadas.

Guatemala, 6 de Marzo de 2025



The team of volunteers in PBI Guatemala is currently composed of Ana Gabriela Ascarrunz Ponce (Bolivia), Sebastián Aguirre Orozco (Colombia), David Félix Azemar (Spain), Giulia Pochini (Italy), Maria Alemany (Spain), Beatriz Pérez Ruiz (Spain) y Júlía García Grané (Spain).

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PBI GUATEMALA DOES NOT NECESSARILY IDENTIFY WITH THE OPINIONS AND CONTENT OF THE REPRODUCED ARTICLES AND MEDIA RELEASES.

**GUATEMALA PROJECT
PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

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