



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 261 - June 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 ratifies the annulment of the genocide trial against Benedicto Lucas García

On Tuesday, June 24, the Constitutional Court (CC) ruled in favor of former general Benedicto Lucas García and ordered that the genocide trial against him be restarted. This ruling annuls everything that took place over the course of 99 hearings, in which 150 testimonies of survivors, expert witnesses and specialists were heard, along with documentary evidence related to massacres and violations committed against the Ixil people during the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC). The Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) had presented 75 testimonies, 55 expert reports, more than 1,300 pieces of documentary evidence and numerous expert reports that established the existence of a counterinsurgency policy planned by B. Lucas García, who served as Army Chief of Staff between 1978 and 1982, during the government of his brother, deceased former de facto president Fernando Romeo Lucas García.¹

The CC's ruling supported the decision of the First High Risk Appeals Court, which accepted a challenge filed by B. Lucas García's defense on November 28, 2024. This recusal alleged bias on the part of Judge Gervi Sical, member of the High Risk Court "A", due to a statement that, according to the defendant's lawyers, compromised the judge's impartiality. At that time, the Court not only accepted the appeal, but ordered the transfer of the case to High Risk Court B and the complete annulment of the proceedings, just as the court was about to hand down its sentence. The Human Rights Prosecutor's Office (DDHH) had requested a 2,860-year prison sentence for B. Lucas García for his alleged commission of genocide, at least 19 massacres, forced disappearances and acts of sexual violence that occurred between 1981 and 1982.²

The plaintiff organizations, the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) and the Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG), have condemned this ruling as a serious setback in the fight against impunity. According to the Center for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH), the justice system is regressing. They affirmed, "with the change in the courts, we once again find ourselves with courts that are ruling far outside of human rights standards." This CC ruling is seen as a significant delay in achieving justice for the victims of the Ixil people.³

The Hogar "Seguro" case reaches its conclusions stage

This month, the trial for the Hogar "Seguro" case, which began on January 10, 2024, entered its conclusions phase. Eight former officials are on trial, accused of being responsible for the events that led to the fire on March 8, 2017, at the Hogar "Seguro" Virgen de la Asunción, which killed 41 children and left 15 others seriously injured.

Located in San José Pinula, about 25 kilometers from the capital, this center was created by the State to protect vulnerable children whose rights had been violated.⁴ On the night of March 7, 2017, the girls and adolescents decided to protest in order to draw attention to the conditions in which they were living. The

¹ Váldez, A., [CC favorece al general Benedicto Lucas y anula el juicio por Genocidio Ixil](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 24 Jun 2025.

² Coyoy, M., [99 audiencias y 150 testigos después, una sala de apelaciones dice que otro tribunal debe juzgar a Lucas García](#), 02 Dec 2024.

³ Váldez, A., Op. Cit.

⁴ García, J., [Conclusiones del juicio del Hogar Seguro apuntan a que las niñas tenían razón](#), Plaza Pública, 3 Jun 2025.

Human Rights Law Firm (BDH), which is representing victims, survivors, and their families, demonstrated in its conclusions that the girls' food and hygiene conditions at the "Hogar" were untenable, and that the reasons for their protest that night were real. In addition, the prosecutor and the plaintiffs in the case aim to prove that the events could have been avoided if the authorities had complied with the protocols of care, which, had they been implemented, would have prevented the terrible events being considered in the trial, since the 56 children would not have been forced to lock themselves in a 7 by 6.8 meter classroom to protest and demand their rights be respected.⁵

During the hearings, the lawyer for the Survivors' Foundation, which represents 23 victims' family members, emphasized that the employees facing trial in this case were responsible, but also highlighted that Jimmy Morales, then President of Guatemala, was responsible for the incidents that took place. According to the lawyer, Morales played a key role in the fire "through the orders he may have given," since he "broke the chain of command in the girls' custody."⁶

Meanwhile, lawyers representing the victims' families filed appeals seeking to have Anahy Keller, the former undersecretary for the Protection and Care of Children and Adolescents, sent back to trial. Keller is accused of dereliction of duty, mistreatment of minors, abuse of authority, manslaughter, and negligent injury. However, on May 21, she was removed from the trial by a provisional injunction granted by the CC, confirming a 2017 ruling by a judge who argued that Keller had no responsibility.⁷

Q'eqchi' communities against mining in Izabal

Fifty-four communities in Livingston, Izabal, took to the streets to protest against 10 mining licenses granted in the Sierra Santa Cruz, a nature reserve located between Izabal and Alta Verapaz. The licenses filed by Río Nickel S.A., a subsidiary of a Canadian company called Central American Nickel (CAN), were approved in 2023 during the Giammattei administration.⁸

The protests began on June 16, after the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) rejected the petition by these 54 communities in Livingston to revoke the 10 licenses. The communities are calling for these mining licenses to be revoked, since they claim that extractive operations in the Sierra Santa Cruz would harm the water sources that provide water to the inhabitants of Livingston. The protests were triggered by the lack of any clear position by the ministries regarding their demand.⁹

Days earlier, as part of the dialogue initiative on the proposed Water Law, representatives of MARN had met with artisanal fishermen, the leadership of the El Estor Fishermen's Guild, and indigenous authorities from El Estor and the Garifuna community of Livingston to discuss the proposal. Government representatives affirmed the current administration's willingness to create a law that guarantees drinking water and the protection of rivers and lakes, while indigenous authorities and fishermen's representatives stressed the importance of defending and protecting water sources from the palm oil and mining companies that exploit and pollute their territory. One of those companies is the Guatemalan Nickel Company (CGN-Pronico), which is accused of polluting Lake Izabal.¹⁰

The protests lasted several days. On the night of June 18, riot police suppressed the protests, seriously injuring the son of a journalist covering the demonstrations by shooting him in the face.¹¹ Following this incident, MARN, which had already confirmed that eight exploration licenses and two mining licenses had irregularities,¹² committed to conducting inspections at the sites where the projects are located and to informing the communities of the results of those inspections in July.¹³

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Redacción Ocote, [Abogado del caso Hogar Seguro pide investigar a Jimmy Morales](#), Agencia Ocote, 17 Jun 2025.

⁷ Figueroa, K., [Cámara Penal deberá decidir si continúa el juicio contra Anahy Keller](#), Agencia Ocote, 20 Jun 2025.

⁸ Xol, J., B., [Gobierno no responde a demandas comunitarias por temas mineros y se agudiza problemática social en Izabal](#), Prensa comunitaria, 19 Jun 2025.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Xol, J., B. [Autoridades indígenas de El Estor y Livingston responsabilizan a empresas de contaminar el agua](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 18 Jun 2025.

¹¹ Xol, J., B. Op. Cit., 19 Jun 2025.

¹² Ramón, S., A., [Ministra confirma irregularidades de mineras en Livingston pero no cancelarán licencias](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 20 Jun 2025.

¹³ De León, D., [Energía y Minas responde a las manifestaciones en Izabal por 10 proyectos mineros](#), La Hora, 19 Jun 2025.

Guatemala's LGBTIQ+ community stands up to hate

On Saturday, June 28, the Sexual and Gender Identity Diversity Parade was held in Guatemala City, with thousands participating, alongside a large display of art and slogans in favor of equal rights. The demonstration, which celebrated its 25th anniversary this year, was protected by an injunction from the CC, following several attempts to cancel it on alleged "moral protection" grounds. Days earlier, on June 21, a diversity march was also held in Quetzaltenango.¹⁴

The march sought not only to celebrate diverse identities, but also to denounce the setbacks faced by the LGBTIQ+ community in the country. In the words of activists, the parade is both a celebration and an act of political resistance. The streets were filled with messages in favor of legal recognition of rights, marriage equality, and gender identity, which still lack legislative backing.

The Lambda Association's Human Rights Observatory recorded 39 violent deaths of LGBTIQ+ people in 2023. In 2024, 36 were reported. And so far in 2025, the Center for Documentation and Monitoring of the Trans Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean has recorded five.¹⁵ There are also concerns about legislation promoted by conservative coalitions that seeks to restrict fundamental rights, such as access to comprehensive sex education and medical care for trans people. Analysts point out that this violence has deep roots in colonial structures, reinforced by religious institutions and political parties that promote a traditional, binary view of the family. They also named that the Congress has ignored recommendations from international human rights organizations.¹⁶

¹⁴ López, J., [El desfile del orgullo LGBTIQ+ toma las calles de Xela para reivindicar sus derechos](#), Ruda, 23 Jun 2025.

¹⁵ Figueroa, K., [EN VIVO|Orgullo LGBTIQ+ 2025 en Guatemala](#), Agencia Ocote, 28 Jun 2025.

¹⁶ J. Hernández, O., [¿De dónde viene el odio hacia la comunidad LGBTIQ+ en Centroamérica?](#), No-Ficción, 16 Jun 2025.

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS¹⁷

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.¹⁸

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

This month we accompanied:

- The **Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared of Guatemala (FAMDEGUA)** in observing the March of Remembrance held on National Heroes and Martyrs Day. The relatives of the detained-disappeared commemorate this day in response to the official holiday, Army Day, which is celebrated on the same day, June 30. On this occasion, they also condemned the military interventions in Gaza and Lebanon, comparing them to the foreign interventions that marked the Guatemalan Internal Armed Conflict (IAC).



- The **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)** to two trial dates and a public hearing in the Hogar “Seguro” case. The case is in its final stages, and last month began with statements from the plaintiffs, including the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, the BDH, and the Survivors’ Foundation. The hearings reviewed the fateful events of March 7 and 8 and the defendants’ involvement in them; plaintiffs called for all of them to be convicted. The Survivors’ Foundation requested that an additional 25% be added to the sentence given the defendants’ abuse of their positions as public officials. The defense also began presenting its closing arguments. The lawyer for the defendant Gloria Castro, a former employee of the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office (PDH), requested that her client be acquitted, arguing that she fulfilled the duties of her position without overstepping her authority. At the public appeal hearing held on Thursday, June 19, the BDH and the Survivors’ Foundation argued that the decision to remove Keller from the case was not thoroughly scrutinized and they requested that it be reconsidered.

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

This month, we visited Alta Verapaz as part of our accompaniment of the **Verapaz Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)**. We met with members of the organization to learn about the latest developments in their work. We also provided support to the organization when a member of the Lajeb Kej community, which was evicted earlier this year, was detained.

We have also been in regular communication with the leadership of the **Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA) - Verapaces Region**, to get updates on their security situation and the raid that took place in the Q’eqchi’ Ch’ina Cangüinic community.

¹⁷ We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

¹⁸ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

This month we accompanied:

- The **Peaceful Resistance of the Poqomam People of Chinautla**. We visited them, and they told us that they continue to call on the state to take responsibility for issuing mining licenses and dispossessing them from their lands. They are also asking for the river to be channeled to prevent landslides that affect their homes and the entire community. They are also calling for one water treatment plant to treat their currently polluted water, as well as another for the waste they receive from the garbage dump in Zone 3 of Guatemala City.
- The **Indigenous Council of Olopa** in two hearings in the case against Ovidio Cardona, owner of the La Conquista S.A. coffee company, for the pollution of two lakes and other environmental damages. One expert witness presented a report on the pollution caused by the coffee plantation's activities. The conclusions phase will begin in early July.
- **Carlos Choc**, whom we visited in El Estor. Carlos told us about his complex security situation and gave us details about his work as a journalist in the Maya Q'eqchi' region. Choc is a human rights defender and environmentalist, known for his important work as a journalist, as well as his efforts to speak out about human rights violations and his support for communities that are victims of environmental aggression and evictions.



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.

In our dialogue with the diplomatic corps, this month we met with:

- Sabine Eichmann, Head of Cooperation at the **German Embassy**.
- Roberta de Beltranena from the **Swiss Embassy**.
- Diego Paz and Dacia Aragón, Ambassador and Program Officer, respectively, of the **Organization of American States (OAS)** in Guatemala.
- Isabel MacDonald, Human Rights Officer at the **British Embassy**.
- Julie Waerzeggers, Head of Mission at the **Belgian Embassy for Central America** in Panama.
- Beatrice Tisato Political Advisor for Central America at the **Norwegian Embassy** in Mexico.
- **Grupo Filtro**, made up of the embassies of Spain, Sweden, Canada, Switzerland, France, the EU delegation, and the OHCHR.
- Pilar Padilla and Alexandra de Almeida Galo, Human Rights Officers at the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Guatemala (OHCHR)**.

With regard to our dialogue with Guatemalan authorities, this month we met with:

- Edgar Picon, Chief of the **National Civil Police (PNC) station in Cobán**.
- Sergio Pinelo, head of the **Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH) office in Cobán**.
- Carlos Guillermo Artola, Assistant Head of the **Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH) in Cobán**.
- Dilia Margarita Có Coy, **Governor of Alta Verapaz**.
- Emilio Flores, Chief of the **PNC substation in San Julián, Chinautla**.
- Edgar Paz, Chief of the **PNC substation in San Antonio Las Flores, Chinautla**.
- Notrato Caal, Secretary of the **municipality of El Estor**.

4. 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.

To mark the **National Day Against Forced Disappearance**, we observed the seventh anniversary of Landscapes of Memory, organized by the National Coordinator of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA). Before it became what it is today, this site was the military base of San Juan Comalapa. In 2003, it was the site of exhumations where hundreds of skeletons of people disappeared during the IAC were found. Since then, CONAVIGUA and the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG) have continued working to identify the remains. During the event, which we attended as observers, participants honored the memory of those who were killed for struggling for a more just Guatemala, as well as their families, who continue to fight for justice to this day.



5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

This month, we provided space for a **security workshop** led by Guatemalan experts, in which several organizations **fighting against impunity and in favor of transitional justice** participated. The goal of the workshop was to identify specific risks involved in this work, as well as the security measures necessary to enable the organizations to continue this important work.

6. 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:

- Sandra Hochstoeger, Austrian representative to the Working Parties on Latin America and the Caribbean (COLAC) and on Human Rights (COHOM) of the **Council of the European Union**.
- Pamela Uwakwe, Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the **Irish Department of Foreign Affairs**, and Peter O'Connor, Irish representative to the Working Parties on Latin America and the Caribbean (COLAC) and on Human Rights (COHOM) of the Council of the European Union.
- Annelie Fergusson, Central America desk at the **Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, Elisabeth Slotter, Director of the Political Section at the **Norwegian Embassy in Mexico** and responsible for Central America, Beatrice Tisato, Political Advisor at the Embassy.
- Mariya Stoyanova, Human Rights Officer in the **Office of the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing**, Gunnar Theissen, Human Rights Officer in the same office, and Mary Briz, Human Rights Officer in the **OHCHR**.
- Garance Tardieu, advisor to the Green Party Political Group for Latin America in the **European Parliament**.
- Jorge Gallego Lizón, political officer at the **European External Action Service (EEAS)** in charge of election observation missions.

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.

REPRESIÓN Y AGRESIONES EN CONTRA DE LAS PERSONAS DEFENSORAS EN LA SIERRA SANTA CRUZ EN LIVINGSTON IZABAL.

Las comunidades Q'eqchi' defensoras de la Sierra Santa Cruz exigen desde hace varios meses el fin de las licencias mineras en áreas protegidas de Livingston Izabal. Como parte de las acciones para la defensa, han entablado un diálogo con el Ministerio de Energía y Minas. Sin embargo, dicho diálogo no se ha dado al nivel que se requiere para llegar a acuerdos. En el marco de una **manifestación pacífica que realizarán el miércoles 18** y luego de agotar el diálogo con las autoridades del MARN **las comunidades defensoras de la Sierra Santa Cruz fueron fuertemente reprimidas por elementos antimotines de la Policía Nacional Civil**. De esta cuenta **resultó gravemente lesionado el periodista Raymundo Amador**, quien cubría los hechos.

Es importante indicar que el **14 de mayo**, del presente año, **fue asesinado el defensor Misael Mata, quien pertenecía a la resistencia anti minera de las 54 comunidades de la Sierra Santa Cruz**. Dicho asesinato continúa en la impunidad, al igual que la mayoría de los 28 asesinatos de personas defensoras que se dieron durante el año 2024, esto debido a la incapacidad e inoperancia que el Ministerio Público ha ejercido en los últimos años.

La **UDEFEGUA** ha realizado una serie de acciones tendientes a que la Policía Nacional Civil haga uso de una serie de instrumentos para la atención de casos del derecho de reunión y manifestación pacífica.

De esa cuenta, es que en 2021 interpusimos una denuncia contra el ministro de Gobernación y cúpula policial de la época, sin que a la fecha haya acciones por parte del Ministerio Público para deducir las responsabilidades penales contra los implicados, en el uso excesivo de la fuerza en contra de una manifestación pacífica.

De esa fecha al presente y ya con un nuevo gobierno, ha existido el suficiente tiempo para elaborar protocolos y formación para que los elementos policiales sepan cómo actuar en las circunstancias como las de ayer en donde ameriten la intervención policial.

Hacemos un llamado a que se aborde la problemática en el marco de la Instancia de Patrones de Análisis de Ataques a Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos, liderada por el Ministerio de Gobernación, para la garantía de no repetición de los hechos.

Exigimos:

- Al **Ministerio de Gobernación** la investigación correspondiente de los hechos ocurridos el día de ayer y que de las mismas se deduzcan las responsabilidades penales, civiles y administrativas en contra del o los responsables de la agresión en contra del periodista Raymundo Amador.
- Que se haga la utilización de los estándares internacionales, así como los protocolos de actuación en la garantía del derecho de manifestación.
- Al **Ministerio de Energía y Minas** que establezca con funcionarios de alto nivel el diálogo con las comunidades y se transparenten los procesos y decisiones, en donde se incluyan las demandas de las comunidades.
- Al **gobierno** la aprobación de la Política Pública de Protección a Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos.

Guatemala, 19 de junio de 2025



The team of volunteers in PBI Guatemala is currently composed of Giulia Pochini (Italy), Maria Alemany (Spain), Beatriz Pérez Ruiz (Spain) y Júlia García Grané (Spain), Maria Fernanda Candela Figueroa (Mexico), Sheron Ribeiro da Silva (Brazil) y Ambroise Lavigne (France).

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