



## 1. 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.*

### **UN Special Rapporteur calls for urgent moratorium on evictions and amnesty for prisoners**

Between July 14 and 25, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, visited Guatemala. He visited several regions of the country, including Guatemala City, Alta Verapaz, Izabal, and Zacapa (the latter three departments face the highest levels of inequality, as well as the negative effects of extractivism and climate change). The purpose of these visits was to meet with representatives from indigenous communities and other civil society actors, as well as national and local authorities.<sup>1</sup>

During his visit, the Rapporteur observed several ways in which the rights of communities and those who defend the right to housing were being violated. He highlighted the violence of the evictions, which involve the presence of massive police forces, as well as hiring of private security forces in cases of extrajudicial evictions. He also emphasized that evicted people's homes, crops, and property were burned. In addition, he spoke of "a clear pattern of criminalization and intimidation toward those who try to protest or speak out against these forced evictions," pointing to the persecution and detention of several community leaders and human rights defenders. He warned that such actions violate international law and undermine the rule of law and called for an urgent moratorium on evictions until adequate legal protection can be guaranteed "and an end to the widespread practice of violent and inhumane forced evictions and criminalization, particularly of indigenous peoples and peasant communities."<sup>2</sup>

In addition, Rajagopal condemned the excessive concentration of land ownership in Guatemala ("only 3% of individuals own their homes" and "2.5% of farms control nearly two-thirds of agricultural land"), the exclusion of women from land ownership, and the inadequate housing conditions of a large part of the population. He proposed several measures, such as historical

1 España, D., [Relator de la ONU para vivienda digna llegará a Guatemala para evaluar desalojos y falta de acceso](#), La Hora, 11 Jul .25 and Ramón, S.A., ["La desigualdad hay que corregirla, Guatemala tiene que ser un único país, no dos"](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 29 Jul 2025.

2 United Nations, [Guatemala: UN expert calls for urgent moratorium on evictions](#), OHCHR, 25 Jul 25.

reparations to address the effects of colonialism and land dispossession, as well as amnesty for those who have been accused of the crime of trespass.<sup>3</sup>

### **Communities in Izabal achieve cancellation of mining licenses granted by the administration of former President Giammattei<sup>4</sup>**

On July 31, at a press conference held at the National Palace of Culture, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) officials announced the cancellation of environmental licenses for 10 nickel exploration and exploitation projects in Sierra Santa Cruz, Livingston, Izabal. These metal mining licenses were granted during the administration of former President Alejandro Giammattei. The announcement that they had been cancelled followed several months of peaceful resistance by the Maya Q'eqchi', Garifuna, and mestizo communities of Livingston and El Estor. The communities insisted on the cancellation of these licenses, which were a source of serious concern, as the Sierra Santa Cruz is the source of their water supply.

"Deputy Minister of the Environment Rodrigo Rodas explained that the area affected by the projects spans more than 43,000 hectares. It is an environmentally rich territory that includes tropical rainforests and cloud forests, with are the habitats for endemic species such as howler monkeys and diverse species of endangered flora. Furthermore, according to the Ministry of the Environment, it is estimated that 42% of the area is natural forest and that 35% of the mining sites coincide with water sources that supply nearby communities."

Rodas also reported several anomalies found in the concession of these ten licenses: no public notice was issued in the Q'eqchi' language to inform communities about the mining licenses; no advisory opinions were sought from institutions responsible for protecting the environment and protected areas (Ministry of Energy and Mines – MEM – and National Council for Protected Areas – CONAP); and they found inconsistencies in signatures, dates, and the haste with which the procedures were handled. Furthermore, the official stated that the environmental impact assessment did not include information on water sources and rivers, the biodiversity in the region, or the environmental impact of mining activities. During its inspection, MARN discovered that there had been excavations to explore the subsoil and determine the existence of minerals, without a permit from MEM.

MARN identified two possible crimes committed by the former officials who issued the licenses: "breach of duty for failing to comply with the minimum requirements set forth in environmental regulations; and material and ideological misrepresentation due to the possible falsification of signatures," according to the Deputy Minister of the Environment. Corruption among MARN

3 Farfán, M., [Relator de la ONU solicita amnistía para condenados por desalojos](#), Agencia Ocote, 30 Jul 2025.

4 Ramón, S.A., [Comunidades logran la cancelación de licencias mineras en Livingston, Izabal](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 30 Jul 2025; Ramón, S.A., [Corrupción en el MARN permitió la entrega de licencias ambientales a mineras en Livingston](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 31 Jul 2025; Alonzo, C., [MARN cancela 10 licencias ambientales para exploración y explotación minera de Izabal](#), AGN, 31 Jul 2025.

officials during former President Giammattei's term in office allowed these mining licenses—which have now been revoked—to be granted.

The cancellation of these licenses is a major win for the communities in the region, who spent months exercising their right to peaceful resistance to protest these illegalities, defending their land and territory, as well as the human rights of the communities and their residents.

#### **45 Q'eqchi' families at risk following Constitutional Court ruling revoking injunction that protected them**

The Plan Grande community is located in Sierra Santa Cruz, north of Lake Izabal. The 45 families who live in the community have been under threat of eviction since 2016. According to community members, the Arriaza Migoya family, owners of the company CXI, S.A., is behind the threats and wants to take over the land to grow oil palms. In addition to the constant threat of eviction, the community has also suffered criminalization, arrests, and even the detention of community leader Abelino Chub, who was criminalized and imprisoned (from 2017 to 2019) based on allegations made by the aforementioned company.<sup>5</sup>

On June 19, a Constitutional Court (CC) ruling authorized the eviction of the community and the arrest of its leaders Abelino Chub, Martín Xi, Mateo Pop, and Héctor Che. Until the time of the ruling, the community had been protected by a 2019 ruling from High Risk Court A, which granted injunctive relief to community representatives, recognizing that the Arriaza family had unjustly accused the community members and did not own the community's land. That same year, a court ordered the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) to investigate irregularities committed by companies owned by the Arriaza family. The CC's new ruling not only revokes the protection, but also leaves the families unprotected, meaning they could be evicted and even prosecuted. The Q'eqchi' families of Plan Grande are asking that the eviction not be carried out and that the state listen to the community and respect their rights.

#### **Quetzaltenango Intercultural Park elects Board of Directors supportive of the Museum of Memory**

On July 2, the Quetzaltenango Intercultural and Sports Center (CEDIQ) elected a new Board of Directors following several months of internal conflicts. The new team appointed to manage the space, which is located in the former Military Zone 17-15, will be in charge of the activities held in the Park and will be responsible for sustaining the Museum of Memory initiative, launched 2023.

During the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC), the military base was used as a detention and torture center. Emma Molina Theissen was one of the people who suffered human rights violations at

<sup>5</sup> Xol, J.B., [El Estor: familias Q'eqchi' de Plan Grande enfrentan otra amenaza de desalojo](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 07 Jul 2025.

this center. Once the Peace Accords were signed, the base was closed, and the space was handed over to an association.<sup>6</sup> The Departmental Government, the City of Quetzaltenango, the business sector, and civil society are responsible for electing the Board of Directors. In 2023, a Board of Directors led by the Roundtable for Dialogue, representing civil society, took charge of CEDIQ and promoted the construction of “a real process of reinterpretation and dignification of memory” to report on the events that occurred during the IAC. The initiative led to the creation of the Museum of Memory, supported by several national and international organizations.<sup>7</sup>

On September 30, 2024, the business sector used the Economic Roundtable to elect a parallel Board of Directors.<sup>8</sup> Several civil society members, particularly representatives of the artistic collective Sona Encendida, feared that the moment would be used to dismantle the memorial initiative.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, members of CEDIQ and Sona Encendida took a stand against the parallel Board of Directors. On June 26, 2025, they organized the symbolic event “A Hug for Memory”, a peaceful protest to oppose the business sector's takeover of the Intercultural Park and to support the right to memory.<sup>10</sup>

The July 2, 2025 election of the Board of Directors halted the business sector's efforts and the co-optation surrounding the control of CEDIQ. Mayra Rivera, representative of the Departmental Government and new president of the Board of Directors, emphasized the desire to “follow up on all the intercultural center's projects.”<sup>11</sup> To ensure the protection of the Museum of Memory, the park's cultural manager, Brandy López, has proposed that the leadership sign a letter formally committing to “safeguarding and protecting the issue of historical memory.”<sup>12</sup>

## **Victory for the Maya Poqomam people of Chinautla on behalf of the environment and human rights**

Last month, the indigenous Maya Poqomam community of Santa Cruz Chinautla was granted an injunction by the Fifth Civil Court of the Department of Guatemala against the Chinautla City Council. The community has protested for years about the complete lack of measures to combat the pollution of the three rivers that run through the area, the lack of treatment for solid waste washed down from the landfill in Zone 3 of Guatemala City by those same rivers, and the presence of illegal dumps around the community.<sup>13</sup> In May 2024, the community asked the City

6 Espinosa, I., [¿Qué intereses hay detrás del Centro Intercultural de Quetzaltenango?](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 16 Nov 24.

7 Mazariegos, D., [“Un abrazo a la memoria”: un plantón para defender el Parque Intercultural como un sitio de memoria en Xela](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 26 Jun 25.

8 Díaz, A., [Nueva junta directiva del Centro Intercultural de Quetzaltenango](#), AGN, 30 Sep 24.

9 Espinosa, I., Op.Cit.

10 Mazariegos, D., Op.Cit.

11 Prensa Comunitaria., [Gobernación de Quetzaltenango preside nueva Junta Directiva del CIDEQ Mayra Rivera, nueva presidenta del Centro Intercultural de Quetzaltenango \(CIDEQ\)](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 02 Jul 25.

12 Mazariegos, D., [Eligen democráticamente a la nueva junta directiva del Parque Intercultural de Quetzaltenango](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 05 Jul 25.

13 Ramón, S.A., [Se ordena a la municipalidad de Chinautla proteger el medio ambiente](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 01 Jul

Council to take the necessary steps to close the illegal dumps that pollute the rivers and to implement an ecological restoration plan.<sup>14</sup> Due to the administration's lack of response, the Ancestral Authorities filed an injunction in October 2024, requesting that the illegal dumps be closed, the ecosystem restored, and the rivers protected.

Finally, the Civil Court granted the injunction and ordered the municipality to take action to stop the river and soil pollution caused by the improper management of solid waste and the proliferation of illegal dumps, in order to mitigate and prevent environmental pollution. Some of the actions ordered include: assuming legal responsibility for managing natural resources and mitigating environmental pollution; closing illegal dumps, restoring ecosystems, and stopping river pollution; conducting a comprehensive study; and guaranteeing the rights of local residents to access information and participate in decision-making.<sup>15</sup>

### **Former anti-corruption prosecutor acquitted by the Tenth Criminal Court**

Former anti-corruption prosecutor Stuardo Campo was accused of alleged breach of duty for having allegedly ordered the unjust arrest of a 70-year-old man while serving as director of the Special Prosecutor's Office for Illegal Trafficking of Migrants.<sup>16</sup> The Internal Affairs Prosecutor's Office had requested a six-year prison sentence for Campo and former assistant prosecutors Carlos Faustino Flores and Gonzalo Rafael Chilel. Ultimately, Judge Magda Martínez ruled that the evidence presented did not show that the defendants had overstepped their authority.<sup>17</sup> Despite being acquitted, Stuardo Campo will remain in pretrial detention as he is facing charges in two other cases (Zolic and Libramiento de Chimaltenango) for breach of duty, denial of justice, and possible abuse of authority. Campo believes that he is being persecuted and retaliated against because of his work as a prosecutor.<sup>18</sup> The former prosecutor is being investigated for one of the cases he was working on, in which several people were imprisoned for corruption.<sup>19</sup>

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2025.

14 Judgment. Constitutional Protective Injunction No. 01046-2024-01895.

15 Aida, [Comunidad maya guatemalteca obtiene respaldo judicial para frenar contaminación transfronteriza](#), 25 Jun 2025.

16 Valdéz, A., [MP pide condena de 6 años contra exfiscal anticorrupción Stuardo Campo](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 17 Jul 25.

17 Osegueda, S., Blanco, E., [Victoria para Stuardo Campo: lo absuelven en caso del MP y la FCT](#), La Hora, 18 Jul 25.

18 Boche Ventura, E., [Exfiscal Stuardo Campo: "No es fácil afrontar un sistema de justicia con pocas garantías"](#), Prensa Libre, 18 Jul 25.

19 Valdéz, A., Op.Cit, 17 Jul 25.

## 2. ACCOMPANIMENTS<sup>20</sup>

*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<sup>21</sup>.*

### THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

This month we accompanied the **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)** to three hearings in the Hogar “Seguro” case. The trial is still in the closing arguments phase, with the following individuals testifying last month: the lawyers for Haroldo Augusto Flores Valenzuela, who was head of the Office for Children and Adolescents of the Attorney General's Office (PGN) at the time of the incident; the defense attorneys for Carlos Antonio Rodas Mejía, who was Secretary of Social Welfare at the time of the incident; the defense attorneys for Lucinda Marroquín, a former police officer who guarded the girls at the home; and Santos Torres Ramírez, the former director of the center. The defense attorneys argued that there were irregularities in the oral and public trial, noted procedural errors, and requested acquittals. On July 30, the surviving girls and the families of the deceased presented their demands to the judge. On August 12, the defendants will have their turn, and a verdict is expected to be handed down that same day.



### THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

This month, we visited Baja Verapaz as part of our accompaniment of the **Verapaz Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)** and the **Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA) - Verapaces Region**. We held meetings with several department-level institutions and followed up on several cases of eviction and criminalization in the region.

### DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

This month we accompanied:

- The **Indigenous Council of Olopa** in four 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. In the closing arguments phase,



<sup>20</sup> We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations that are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no specific activities to highlight.

<sup>21</sup> See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: [Groups and Individuals Currently Accompanied by PBI](#).



the public prosecutor and the lawyers for the joint plaintiffs asserted that there was evidence of pollution implicating the defendant; therefore, they requested an eight-year prison sentence. Meanwhile, the defense attorney requested an acquittal, arguing, among other things, that no one directly saw his client dumping waste or engaging in acts of pollution. He also pointed out what they consider to be errors made by the prosecution in the reports they submitted as evidence. Ultimately, on July 31, the judge acquitted the defendant of all charges of industrial pollution and civil liability. He was also exempted from paying court costs. However, he is required to comply with one of three environmental mitigation measures within two years, or face charges of contempt of court for noncompliance.

- We accompanied the **Indigenous Community of San Francisco Quezaltepeque** at the first hearing of the oral and public trial in the Quezaltepeque Volcano case against Fernando Gregorio, who is accused of trespassing and logging on the Quezaltepeque volcano. The parties reached an agreement, and the judge granted a deferred judgment, which voids the deeds to the property and requires the defendant to undertake reforestation. Representatives of the Indigenous Community affirmed that the Quezaltepeque volcano is a sacred place for the Maya Ch'orti' people and that the lands do not belong to the municipality, but rather to the Ch'orti' people who care for the territory and its natural resources.
- **Carlos Choc**, whom we visited in El Estor. He once again shared information about his complicated security situation with us 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 for speaking out about human rights violations and supporting communities that are victims of environmental aggression and evictions. We also took advantage of the visit to meet with several departmental authorities.



### 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:

- José Pablo Rivera and Jeffrey D. Borenstein of the **U.S. Embassy**.
- Juan Antonio Frutos Goldaratz, Deputy Head of the **Spanish Embassy**.
- Annemarie Duncker Stecher and Sebastián Osorio Bunster, Ambassador and Official of the **Embassy of Chile**.

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

- Julio Wilson García Tiu, head of the **Indigenous Peoples' Ombudsman's Office** of the **Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH)**.
- Eulalia Nallely Simon López and Olga Raquel Estrada of the **Office for the Protection of Women's Rights** of the **PDH**.
- Teresita Mérida, Assistant Head of the **PDH departmental office in Salamá**.
- Vicente López, chief officer, and Ingrid Rodríguez, police officer of the **National Civil Police (PNC) of Salamá, Baja Verapaz**.
- Mario Córdón, assistant to the **mayor of Salamá, Baja Verapaz**.
- Jimena Toledo, Peace Culture and Human Rights Outreach Coordinator of the **Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH) de Baja Verapaz**.
- Het Waldemar Barrera, Assistant Head of the **PDH departmental office in Izabal**.
- Israel Quiñonez Recines of the **COPADEH in Izabal**.
- Carlos Tenas Martínez of the **Interior Ministry of Izabal**.

#### 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.*

This month, we observed the **arraignment in the Conrado de la Cruz and Herlindo Cifuentes forced disappearance case**. De la Cruz and Cifuentes were a priest and a catechist, respectively, and were disappeared on May 1, 1980. The Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG) is a joint plaintiff in the case. The judge ruled that Adán de Jesús Barillas Pinto, former investigator and former head of arrests for Commando 6 of the now defunct National Police, will be brought to trial. The judge ordered several precautionary measures, including house arrest, and gave the Public Prosecutor's Office three months to conduct its investigation before beginning the trial.


#### 5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

This month, we helped set up a **community safety workshop** in Chiquimula, led by Guatemalan experts. The Maya Ch'orti' Indigenous Council of Olopa and the Indigenous Community of San Francisco Quezaltepeque took part. The workshop aimed to identify the specific risks involved in their work in defense of land and territory, as well as the security measures necessary for them to continue this important work.



## 6. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

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



### NOTA DE PRENSA

**La Asociación para la Justicia y la Reconciliación –AJR– y la Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala –ODHAG–,**

**Ante el fallecimiento del general retirado Manuel Antonio Callejas y Callejas manifestamos:**

Paz para su familia, memoria y justicia para los pueblos de Guatemala.

Con indignación conocimos la noticia del fallecimiento del General Callejas, sin que haya enfrentado a la justicia en el más reciente Juicio por Genocidio, Delitos contra deberes de humanidad y Desaparición forzada, en contra de la población Ixil que impulsamos el año pasado.

En su paso por la Jefatura de la Sección de Inteligencia Militar del Estado Mayor General del Ejército (EMGE) conocida como G-2, bajo el mando de los generales Mendoza Palomo y Benedicto Lucas García, Callejas fue responsable de graves violaciones a los derechos humanos cometidas en contra de comunidades enteras en todo el país incluyendo desapariciones forzadas, actos de tortura, violencia sexual, ejecuciones extrajudiciales, masacres, desplazamiento forzado y genocidio causando luto y dolor a más 45 mil familias quienes siguen sin conocer el paradero de sus seres queridos detenidos-desaparecidos bajo sus órdenes.

Fue bajo su dirección, como lo probamos en juicio, según el documento militar presentado ante el Tribunal de Sentencia de Mayor Riesgo Grupo “A” denominado *Apreciación de Inteligencia* del EMGE, que se catalogó a la población civil, al sector religioso, sindical, y estudiantil, así como a comunidades indígenas enteras como enemigo interno, ordenando su eliminación.

Por ello, los sobrevivientes lograron sentencia condenatoria por su responsabilidad en la detención y desaparición forzada del niño Marco Antonio Molina Theissen, lo llevaron a juicio por la desaparición forzada y ejecución extrajudicial de más de 500 personas en la Zona Militar No. 21 de Cobán, Alta Verapaz y lo procesamos penalmente por su responsabilidad en graves masacres que costaron la vida a un mínimo de 1700 mujeres, hombres, niñas y niños ixiles cometidas entre 1978 y 1982 en los municipios de Santa María Nebaj, San Juan Cotzal y San Gaspar Chajul.

Hoy, aunque muere amparado por un sistema judicial corrupto, recordamos que fuimos capaces de llevarlo a tribunales y engrilletado como GENOCIDA. Por ello como familiares de las víctimas del genocidio, exigimos al sistema de justicia que priorice los casos de justicia transicional con el fin de llegar a la verdad, la justicia, la reparación y la no repetición.

Agradecemos las muestras de solidaridad internacional para que el Estado de Guatemala cumpla con su obligación de investigar y sancionar a los perpetradores.

Guatemala. 24 de julio de 2025.

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

*All photos published are from PBI*

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**GUATEMALA PROJECT  
PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

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