



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 263 - August 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.

Eight years after the events, a verdict in the Hogar “Seguro” case

“Justice for the Hogar Seguro girls,” proclaimed several of those present at the conclusion of the sentencing hearing in the Hogar “Seguro” case. Eight years after the fire that led to the deaths of 41 girls, Judge Ingrid Vanesa Cifuentes found six of the seven defendants guilty. The prison sentences handed down are: 6 years for Gloria Castro, former Ombudsman for Children’s Rights at the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office (PDH); 13 years for Lucinda Marroquín, former deputy inspector of the National Civil Police (PNC), who had the key to the room where the girls burned to death; 15 years for Luis Pérez, former deputy commissioner of the PNC; 17 years for Brenda Chamán, former head of Special Protection at the Secretariat of Social Welfare (SBS); and 25 years each for Santos Torres Ramírez, former director of the Hogar “Seguro” Virgen de la Asunción, and Carlos Rodas Mejía, former head of the SBS at the time of the events. Harold Flores, former attorney in the Attorney General’s Office for Children and Adolescents, was acquitted on the grounds that he did not hold a position of authority or have decision-making powers about the girls’ confinement.¹

The ruling is an important milestone in bringing those responsible to account for the abuse of children and adolescents in Guatemala. The fire, which occurred on March 8, 2017, was the culmination of a series of abuses committed against the residents of this state-run home. Since 2010, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child had warned about the lack of implementation of care standards at the center. In 2013, two workers at the home were arrested after sexually assaulting two children.²

This ruling also puts an end to a process characterized by delays, threats, and revictimization of the victims and their families.³ “I no longer see myself as a survivor. For me, survivor is far too low. I survived everything that was happening. Today, I see myself more as a warrior. A warrior who has learned to face the world,” explained one of the survivors shortly before the end of the trial.⁴ In fact, on many occasions they were labeled as people in conflict with the law or “troublemakers,” prompting several of the survivors to ask that “they stop pointing the finger at us, as if we were to blame.” They also requested security measures be put in place for fear of retaliation.⁵

After their long struggle for justice, the victims stated, “I don’t feel happy or sad...I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders, because those people were guilty.” The mother of one of the girls who died believes that “to be honest, it’s not very long. For all those girls and the survivors, it is a short sentence. It makes me very sad, but at least there has been some justice.”⁶ Another survivor emphasized that the harm done is irreparable, saying, “The State will never pay off its debt.”⁷

¹ Coromac, D., [Gobierno resalta sentencia “histórica” en el caso Hogar Seguro](#), Agencia Guatemalteca de Noticias, 12 Aug 2025.

² López, J., [Caso Hogar “Seguro”: la historia de un femicidio de Estado](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 12 Aug 2025.

³ Xinico Batz, S., [“¡No fue el fuego, fue el Estado!”](#), Plaza Pública, 17 Aug 2025.

⁴ Longo Bautista, M.J., [Sobreviviente del incendio del Hogar Seguro: “La sociedad sabrá que nosotras siempre dijimos la verdad”](#), Agencia Ocote, 28 Aug 2025.

⁵ Longo Bautista, M.J., [Hablan las sobrevivientes del Hogar Seguro: cinco de ellas piden justicia digna](#), Agencia Ocote, 31 Aug 2025.

⁶ Longo Bautista, M.J., [Así vivieron sobrevivientes y familiares de víctimas la “agridulce” sentencia del caso Hogar Seguro](#), Agencia Ocote, 13 Aug 2025.

⁷ Longo Bautista, M.J., Op.Cit., 28 Aug 2025.

Through this ruling, the judge responded to victims' demands in the face of events that have come to be regarded as "state femicide."⁸ The reparation measures ordered include a public event at which the President of the Republic will apologize on behalf of the state. The judge also ordered the creation and upkeep of several memorial sites to honor the victims, including the memorial in the Plaza de la Constitución, which has been repeatedly vandalized.⁹ Furthermore, at the request of one of the victims, an investigation was ordered into then President Jimmy Morales' involvement in the events.¹⁰

Criminalization of indigenous authorities continues unabated: Esteban Toc Tzay captured, four months after the arrests of Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán

On August 9, International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, there was public condemnation of "political persecution" as a strategy employed by the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) against members of the 48 Cantons of Totonicapán, including against indigenous leaders Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán.¹¹ The two were arrested on April 23, 2025, following an arrest warrant issued by the Prosecutor's Office against Organized Crime. They have been held in prison ever since. Their arrest is the result of criminalization they have faced since participating in the 2023 national strike. The national strike took place within the context of social protest against the MP's efforts to overturn the presidential election results. These protests and the national strike ultimately enabled Bernardo Arévalo to assume the presidency. Both leaders are being charged with terrorism, obstruction of criminal proceedings, and unlawful association.

On August 25, national and international authorities held a press conference in front of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) to speak out against procedural delays in the justice system. Furthermore, given that no judge has been appointed for the intermediate phase, which decides whether there is sufficient evidence for Pacheco and Chaclán to face trial, social organizations are calling on the justice system to assign a judge to rule on the matter and decide on alternative measures during the trial.¹²

Unfortunately, there has been no end to the persecution and criminalization of indigenous leaders who participated in and led the 2023 strike and demonstrations in defense of democracy. On August 28, Esteban Toc Tzay, deputy mayor of Sololá between 2022 and 2023, was arrested at the request of the MP. Indeed, the indigenous authorities of Sololá were one of the most active groups in the national strike.¹³ The Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity has charged Esteban Toc with terrorism, unlawful association, obstruction of criminal proceedings, and obstruction of justice.

He was sent to Mariscal Zavala prison at the end of his initial hearing, despite having a serious medical condition.¹⁴ A number of indigenous authorities issued a statement repudiating his arrest and calling on "the international community to speak out and condemn these repressive actions" (see statement at the end of this document).

Arrest of Leocadio Juracán: a continued pattern of criminalization against land and territory defenders

On August 13, Leocadio Juracán Salome, current leader of the Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA) and former member of parliament (2015-2019), was arrested by PNC agents at La Aurora Airport. His initial hearing was held five days after his arrest, on August 18. His detention is directly related to the March 5, 2025 eviction of 36 Q'eqchi' families from the community of Río Tebernal (Livingston, Izabal). The CCDA has accompanied the community since 2024. Juracán's arrest is part of a pattern of criminalization that indigenous and peasant grassroots organizations have long suffered for defending human rights, especially land access and territorial defense.¹⁵

⁸ López, J., Op.Cit., 12 Aug 2025.

⁹ Longo Bautista, M.J., [Las medidas del caso Hogar Seguro "para que esto no se vuelva a repetir,"](#) Agencia Ocote, 20 Aug 2025.

¹⁰ López, J., [¿Qué tiene que ver Jimmy Morales con el crimen del Hogar Seguro y por qué será investigado?](#), Prensa Comunitaria 14 Aug 2025.

¹¹ Bautista Xol, J., [En el Día de los Pueblos Indígenas, Pacheco y Chaclán llevan 109 días en prisión](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 09 Aug 2025.

¹² Ibid. and Ramón, S.A., [Organizaciones sociales e indígenas exigen la libertad de Luis Pacheco y Héctor Chaclán](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 25 Aug 2025.

¹³ Maldonado, A., [Capturan a otro líder ancestral del Paro Nacional 2023](#), Agencia Ocote, 28 Aug 2025.

¹⁴ Alvarez, N., [Exlíder indígena es enviado a Mariscal Zavala](#), Emisoras Unidas, 29 Aug 2025.

¹⁵ Front Line Defenders, [Guatemala: Concern over the criminalisation of indigenous human rights defenders of the 48 Cantones of Totonicapán and the risk of a wave of arrests](#), 03 Jun 2025.

Despite the irregularities and inconsistencies in the case, Judge Fabián de León ordered the human rights defender stand trial for aggravated trespass, one of the four charges brought against him. The judge scheduled the intermediate phase hearing for February 5, 2026, at which time the MP must present evidence in support of its case. In this case, as in others like it, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, along with other organizations, have spoken out about and documented the manipulation of the judicial system to criminalize, persecute, and repress human rights defenders as part of a strategy of sociopolitical violence.¹⁶

The CCDA is a peasant and indigenous organization that works to defend community rights, especially with regard to land, territory, agrarian justice, and labor dignity. The organization has a long history of social and political struggle promoting sustainable rural development and the autonomy of peoples. Unfortunately, it has been persecuted and attacked countless times. From 2016 to 2025, eighteen CCDA leaders were murdered; in 2024 alone, twenty-one members of the organization were imprisoned. Now there is the current trial against Juracán, who declared that the case was trumped up to justify his criminalization. Furthermore, the remarks made by the Association for the Defense of Private Property (Acdepro) against the CCDA and Juracán in the context of this case have also raised concerns.¹⁷

In light of such a critical situation for those who defend land and territory, during a recent visit to the country, UN Special Rapporteur Margaret Satterthwaite pointed out that, “The instrumental use of criminal law by the Prosecutor General’s Office appears to amount to a systematic pattern of intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights, targeted at specific groups.”¹⁸

UDEFEGUA publishes its 2024 report

This month, the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders – Guatemala (UDEFEGUA) published its report on the situation of human rights defenders, organizations, and communities for 2024. The publication documents 4,133 attacks. The highest peaks of violence occurred in January (transition between administrations), May, and August (election of Courts). Among the main groups targeted are justice operators, those who defend the impartiality of the justice system and democratic spaces, and journalists working at the national and community levels: 2,048 cases were against justice operators and 1,227 against journalists. The data shows a correlation between cases of criminalization of human rights defenders, electoral processes, and the interests of political and business groups. The aim of these attacks is to ensure control of the judicial system and to intimidate those who criticize corruption. This is particularly worrying in view of the electoral processes that will take place in 2026: the election of judges to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the Constitutional Court (CC), and the appointment of the Attorney General.¹⁹

The main types of attacks covered in the report are stigmatization, defamation, and harassment. The main aggressors are netcenters, conservative groups, and political parties. The report also highlights the MP’s failure to adequately process these complaints. According to Maya K’iche’ lawyer Ana Lucía Xiloj, “complaints filed with the MP are not investigated or can take years to be processed.”²⁰

¹⁶ Pérez Marroquín, C., and Vargas E., [Juez liga a proceso al exdiputado Leocadio Juracán por usurpación agravada y le otorga arresto domiciliario](#), Prensa Libre, 18 Aug 2025; Bautista Xol, J., [Se evidencian irregularidades en la detención del dirigente campesino Leocadio Juracán](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 20 Aug 2025; El Observatorio, [Guatemala: Persecución, criminalización y represión transnacional de personas defensoras de derechos humanos en Guatemala](#), OMCT - World Organisation Against Torture, 01 Nov 2024.

¹⁷ Mujeres y derechos a Tierra y Territorios, [Comité Campesino del Altiplano- CCDA](#), 06.06.2025; Prensa Comunitaria, [Detienen a Leocadio Juracán, dirigente campesino y exdiputado](#), 13 Aug 2025; Antonio, S., [Un finquero y la PGN detrás de la criminalización de Leocadio Juracán](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 19 Aug 2025; Bautista Xol, J. Op.Cit; Prensa Comunitaria, [“No me notificaron porque me detuvieron”, Leocadio Juracán denuncia como arbitraria su detención](#), 16 Aug 2025.

¹⁸ OHCHR, [Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Visit to Guatemala, 12 to 23 May 2025 - Preliminary Observations](#), 12-23 May 2025.

¹⁹ Gálvez, J. [Agresiones contra defensores sociales en Guatemala se mantienen](#), Agencia Ocote, 22 Aug 2025; Fuentes, S. [Estas fechas son clave en la configuración del poder político en Guatemala](#), Plaza Pública, 15 Jul 2025; Impunity Watch. [Bulletin – Upcoming elections in Guatemala are key to free the justice and electoral systems](#), 24 Jul 2025.

²⁰ Gálvez, J. Op. Cit., 14 Aug 2025.

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS²¹

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.²²

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

This month, we accompanied the **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)** to the following hearings:

- Four in the “Military Diary” case, two of which were to review alternative measures for defendants Enrique Cifuentes de la Cruz and Edgar Corado Samayoa. In the case of Cifuentes de la Cruz, his defense requested special permission for him to leave prison and receive medical care at his home. The request was denied, and a National Institute of Forensic Sciences medical evaluation was ordered. In the case of Edgar Corado Samayoa, the defense requested a review of alternative measures based on the defendant’s right to health. The judge rejected the request because the circumstances have not changed and because of the seriousness of the crimes of which Samayoa has been accused.
- The intermediate phase in the case of Candelaria Pop Coy, her husband Pedro Cabal Choc, and their infant son, Rigoberto Cabal Pop, for their arrest without a warrant, captivity, subjugation, forced labor, and sexual violence between 1984 and 1986 in Cobán. The judge decided to bring the defendant, Colonel Edgar R. Hernández Méndez, to trial for crimes against humanity and aggravated sexual violence.
- The ruling in the Hogar “Seguro” case (see section on “The Current Situation”).



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 both organizations to follow up on cases of eviction and criminalization in the region.

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

We accompanied the **Indigenous Council of Olopa** in the first hearing of a criminal case against 10 of its members. The MP presented the facts of the accusations, which allegedly took place in 2019 during a peaceful demonstration against mining activities in the area. The company mined antimony, a highly polluting activity that is harmful to the land and the health of the people who live there. In 2021, the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) ordered the company to suspend these operations, which are still inactive for the time being, though the Constitutional Court has lifted this suspension despite recognizing that the right to consultation has been violated. The Ch’orti’ Maya indigenous authorities are accused of detaining, threatening, and assaulting the owners of the mining company. The defense pointed out irregularities in the evidence presented by the MP,



²¹ We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

²² See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>



and the judge agreed to consider these observations when handing down the sentence. The trial will continue on September 11 at 11 a.m. at the Chiquimula Judicial Branch.

We also observed a peaceful protest in front of the Cantera Los Manantiales company, against the possible resumption of mining activities.

As part of this area of work, we accompanied the **Indigenous Community of San Francisco Quezaltepeque** during the community celebration of their patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi. The activities included a procession through the village to the community center, where prayers and songs were performed, culminating in a community lunch.

Also as part of this area of work, we visited El Estor (Izabal) to accompany **Carlos Choc**, a Maya Q'eqchi' community journalist and human rights defender. We also used this trip to introduce our work to local authorities and to follow up on cases of evictions and criminalization taking place in the area.

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:

- Erick Gerardo Ulate Quesada, Ambassador, and José Pablo Badilla Castillo, First Secretary, of the **Embassy of Costa Rica**.
- Linda Jazmín Amezcua Orellana, Mónica Velarde Méndez, Linda Marina Dolores Munive, Miguel Ángel López Rojas of the **Embassy of Mexico**.

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

- Flor de María Salazar and Luis Ávila from the **COPADEF National Office**.
- Luis Compá, **Governor of Chiquimula**.
- Wilson Hernández, **PNC Chief** from El Estor.
- Miguel Gregorio from the **Chiquimula Departmental PNC**.
- Jesús Alberto Calderón Aguirre from the **Chiquimula PDH**.
- **Gerardo Villamar from the PDH's Office of the Ombudsman for Due Process and Persons Deprived of Liberty.**

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 hearing in the intermediate phase of the **Gerardi case** against Dario Morales Garcia. Monsignor Gerardi was assassinated on April 26, 1998, two days after presenting “GUATEMALA: NEVER AGAIN,” the Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI) report, which documented and analyzed thousands of testimonies about human rights violations perpetrated during the internal armed conflict. At the hearing, the special prosecutor from the MP and the lawyer from the Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG), a joint plaintiff in the case, explained the reasons they are requesting that the oral and public debate phase be opened and the defendant tried for the crime of extrajudicial execution as an accomplice and for perjury. The hearing was suspended because new witness testimonies were added that require review by the judge.

We observed the **Technical Roundtable on attacks against the rights of indigenous peoples, organizations, communities, and authorities**, organized by the Ministry of the Interior.

We attended the **event, “Remember in Order to Live” organized by the Mutual Support Group (GAM)** as part of the International Day Against Forced Disappearances. The panelists included GAM litigator Maynor Alvarado, GAM member and founder Sara Poroj, and PBI Guatemala communications coordinator Silvia Weber. It was a space to talk about memory, justice, and history, and to listen to those who continue to search for their loved ones. Maynor Alvarado thanked the international community and other organizations for their support and accompaniment, and Sara thanked PBI for its accompaniment during the early years of GAM, after it was founded in 1984.

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

This month, we opened spaces to hold three activities:

- A **security workshop** for organizations fighting against impunity and for historical memory, in which defenders from 15 different groups participated to review and strengthen their protection and security capacities.
- Two **healing gatherings** for women defenders from different territories, one held in San Lucas Tolimán, Sololá, and the other at the Nuevo Horizonte cooperative in Petén. Some 45 women participated, and both spaces were facilitated by the TZ’KAT Network of Ancestral Healers of Territorial Community Feminism.

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.



LAS AUTORIDADES INDÍGENAS DESDE NUESTROS PUEBLOS Y COMUNIDADES

MANIFESTAMOS



Municipalidad Indígena
Santa Catarina Interoceánico
Sololá, Guatemala C.A.



Utopías



1. Nuestro rotundo rechazo a las acciones del Ministerio Público en contra del Ex Vice Alcalde de la Municipalidad Indígena de Sololá, del año 2022 y 2023, señor Esteban Toc Tzay, quien fue capturado el día de hoy a las once horas, por la Policía Nacional Civil, cuando se dirigía a la ciudad de Quetzaltenango, a recibir tratamiento médico. La PNC, lo condujo a la subestación de la cabecera de Totonicapán, luego lo trasladaron a la de San Cristóbal Totonicapán; finalmente, al Centro Regional de Justicia de la ciudad de Quetzaltenango. Entendemos que es por el mismo caso por el que guardan prisión directivos de los 48 cantones de Totonicapán; Luis Pacheco y Héctor Chacón.
2. Nuestras autoridades indígenas ancestrales, nuestras comunidades y la organización de nuestros pueblos son un legado de nuestros antepasados y no son organizaciones son criminales como lo pretende presentar la señora Fiscal del Ministerio Público.
3. Nuestra solidaridad con don Esteban Toc Tzay y su familia; y, nuestro repudio por estas acciones de racismo, discriminación, criminalización por el ejercicio de los derechos de nuestros pueblos.
4. Exigimos al Presidente de la República una actuación contundente contra la persecución penal que el pacto de corruptos y golpistas mantienen en contra de autoridades indígenas, defensores de derechos humanos y periodistas.
5. Exigimos al Organismo Judicial, nombrar jueces o juezas objetivos e imparciales para que conozcan estos casos de criminalización fabricados por el Ministerio Público y sus fiscales afines. Y, al juez o jueza que conozca el caso, le exigimos hacer valere la independencia judicial, la objetividad, la imparcialidad y no prestarse a los caprichos de criminalización que fabrica el Ministerio Público contra quienes considera sus enemigos políticos.
6. Exigimos a la comunidad internacional pronunciarse y condenar estas acciones de represión que realiza la Fiscal General, junto con otros fiscales, jueces y magistrados que forman parte del pacto de corruptos.
7. Alertamos a todas los pueblos y comunidades indígenas de todo el país, a tomar las precauciones y medidas de seguridad que consideran necesarios para evitar que continúen criminalizando a nuestras autoridades. Si no nos dejan en paz, tampoco los dejaremos en paz.

Desde nuestros territorios el día veintiocho de agosto del año dos mil veinticinco.

MUNICIPALIDAD INDÍGENA
Santa Lucía Utatlán, Sololá
Guatemala, C. A.

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), Nelly Horvath (Hungary), Ericka Stephania López Mota (Mexico) y Nataly Navarro (Mexico).

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**GUATEMALA PROJECT
PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

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