



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 268 - January 2026

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.

Another indigenous authority criminalized and prosecuted for defending democracy¹

2026 began with a fourth criminalization and prosecution process against another one of the leaders of the national strike and 106-day uprising to defend democracy, which took place at the end of 2023. Indigenous and ancestral authorities, together with their communities, defended the results of the presidential elections and democratic processes, demanding the resignation of Attorney General Consuela Porras. In April of last year, Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán, former authorities of the 48 Cantones of Totonicapán, were arrested. They have been in pretrial detention ever since. In August, Esteban Toc Tzay, an indigenous leader from Sololá, was arrested and placed under house arrest. All three were charged with terrorism, obstruction of criminal proceedings, criminal conspiracy, sedition, and obstruction of justice.

On January 14, Basilio Puac, former vice president of the 48 Cantones of Totonicapán, was arrested. He has been charged with sedition, obstruction of criminal proceedings, and criminal conspiracy. The presiding judge did not accept the terrorism charge and granted Puac house arrest. Puac was accompanied by members of the current board of the 48 Cantones, who offered words of encouragement and solidarity.

Consuelo Porras's Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and the Foundation Against Terrorism (FCT), who tried to sabotage the 2023 election results, have brought these cases forward and have criminally prosecuted indigenous authorities across the country. These cases are closed to the public, meaning that neither the media nor observers are allowed to attend. Furthermore, the process is being delayed because the FCT has twice recused the judges assigned to continue with the next stages of the judicial process.

CSJ closes case against journalists²

The Injunctions and Preliminary Hearings Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) denied an injunction requested by the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity (FECI) in the case against journalists from various media outlets, columnists, and staff of the now-defunct newspaper *elPeriódico*, whose editor, José Rubén Zamora, remains criminalized and in prison.

The judges upheld the decision handed down by Judge Aurora Gutiérrez of the Fifth Criminal Court, who ruled that the case should not be resolved through criminal proceedings, but rather before a Court of Honor, as established in Articles 35 and 71 of the Freedom of Expression Act. The ruling also refers to Article 35 of the Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, which recognizes the media's work as a matter of public interest and establishes that publications containing allegations, criticism, or accusations against public officials or employees do not constitute crimes or offenses. This decision definitively closes the case.

The FECI, led by Rafael Curruchiche, accused the journalists of obstructing justice by publishing articles on the criminalization of José Rubén Zamora and of allegedly conducting a "disinformation campaign."

¹ Ramón, S.A., [Exvicepresidente de 48 Cantones Basilio Puac saldrá de la cárcel para enfrentar proceso penal desde su domicilio](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 16 Jan 2026; Valdéz, A., [Se aplaza audiencia de Esteban Toc, autoridad indígena criminalizada por el MP](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 16 Jan 2026.

² Peña, Y., [CSJ niega amparo del MP por el caso contra periodistas de elPeriódico](#), La Hora, 30 Jan 2026; Pérez Marroquín, C. y Vargas, E., [CSJ archiva caso contra periodistas de elPeriódico por falta de competencia penal de la FECI](#), Prensa Libre, 30 Jan 2026.

El Periódico publications reported that the arrest of the newspaper's founder and president was an act of retaliation by the Alejandro Giammattei administration and Attorney General María Consuelo Porras in response to the newspaper's investigations and Zamora's critical columns.

As a result of Judge Jimi Bremer's decision to bring Zamora to trial, the MP sought to investigate Julia Corado, who was editor-in-chief of el Periódico before it shut down; Gerson Ortiz, former head of information; reporters Christian Velix, Alexander Valdéz, Rony Ríos, and Denis Aguilar; and columnists Edgar Gutiérrez and Gonzalo Marroquín.

Gerardi case: evidentiary hearing against Darío Morales

On January 6 and 16, High Risk Court D, presided over by Judge Abelina Cruz, held evidentiary hearings against Darío Morales García. He is accused of perjury and being an accessory to extrajudicial execution in the case of the murder of Monsignor Gerardi. The MP and the joint plaintiff, the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala (ODHAG), presented more than 100 pieces of evidence. These include testimony from Héctor Hugo Pérez Aguilera, currently a Constitutional Court (CC) judge and former attorney general at the time of the events, as well as technical-military and intelligence expert reports by Peruvian expert Clover Benamú and General Rodolfo Robles Espinosa. The evidence was submitted in order to establish whether Gerardi's murder was part of an Army special intelligence operation. The defense requested that several pieces of evidence be excluded due to alleged procedural violations; however, the judge rejected their request. The case was sent to trial before High Risk Court D, and the judge ruled to keep the defendant in pre-trial detention at the Men's Pretrial Detention Center in Zone 18.³

Darío Morales, a member of the Presidential General Staff (EMP) during the Álvaro Arzú administration (1996-2000), is being tried for his involvement in the murder of Bishop Juan José Gerardi. The murder took place three days after the publication of the Historical Memory Recovery report, *Guatemala Never Again*, on April 26, 1998. As the ODHAG's coordinator, Monsignor Gerardi led the effort to collect thousands of testimonies about crimes committed by the Guatemalan army during the internal armed conflict. According to the charges, in this case there is "reason to believe that Morales was at the scene of the crime on the day of the murder and that he may have altered parts of the crime scene in order to prevent the identification of those who committed the crime against the priest."⁴

New developments in cases of criminalization against former justice operators

The Seventh Criminal Court lifted all coercive measures against Claudia González, lawyer and former head of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), including a travel ban, a prohibition on leaving the country, an obligation to report to the MP every 15 days, and a restriction on her movement, limiting her to the department of Guatemala. The renowned lawyer, who has been internationally recognized for her fight against impunity and corruption, remains subject to prosecution and will face an oral and public hearing, scheduled to begin on May 5, 2026. Former judge Blanca Stalling, who recently passed away, accused González of abuse of authority for allegedly ordering irregular proceedings against her in a 2017 corruption case. The crime of abuse of authority can only be committed by public officials, a category to which González never belonged.⁵

Former anti-corruption prosecutor Stuardo Campo's legal situation remains unclear. On January 26, an intermediate stage hearing was scheduled to establish the plaintiff and review coercive measures in the *Libramiento de Chimaltenango* case. However, Judge Victor Cruz, who was designated as an anti-democratic actor by the U.S. State Department, suspended the proceedings. The last hearing in this case was held in December 2023. Campo has been in pretrial detention since then. In 2025, he was acquitted in the Alfa 7 case, but he still faces charges in two other cases.⁶ He and the international community describe the proceedings against him as retaliation for his investigations into former officials from the Jimmy Morales and Alejandro Giammattei administrations.⁷

³ Verdad y Justicia, [Transmisión #CasoGerardi](#), Facebook, 16 Jan 2026; Álvarez, N., [Caso Gerardi: Inicia audiencia de ofrecimiento de pruebas contra Darío Morales](#), Emisoras Unidas, 6 Jan 2026.

⁴ Osegueda, S., [Caso Gerardi: Jueza envía a juicio a exespecialista del EMP](#), La Hora, 16 Sep 2026.

⁵ García, O. and Vargas, E., [Tribunal levanta medidas de coerción contra Claudia González, exmandataria de la Cicig](#), Prensa Libre, 21 Jan 2026.

⁶ Verdad y Justicia, [#PersecuciónPolítica #StuardoCampo](#), Facebook interviews, 26 Jan 2026.

⁷ España, D., [Stuardo Campo narra su lucha tras dos años en prisión y señala al sistema por prisión preventiva: «No es](#)

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS⁸

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.⁹

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY



As part of our efforts to combat impunity, this month we accompanied the **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)** to the intermediate stage hearing in the *Military Diary* case, which concerns the possible involvement of Edgar Rolando Hernández Méndez. At that hearing, the judge reviewed the request for provisional closure and dismissal filed by the MP and supported by the defendant. The judge ruled to dismiss both requests, considering that there was insufficient evidence to support them. She also reiterated the MP's duty to continue the investigation, especially given that no inquiries had been made to determine the whereabouts of Candelaria Pop Coy, one of the victims in the case. Similarly, the judge ordered the attorney in charge to resubmit a final report within one week, setting January 21 as the deadline. The next hearing was scheduled for February 10, at 9:30 a.m.

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

This month, we visited the department of Alta Verapaz, where we held a meeting with the **Verapaz Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)**. The purpose of the meeting was to follow up on cases of eviction and criminalization in the region, as well as the security situation of the individuals and communities we accompany.

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

This month, as part of our focus on territorial defense:

- We accompanied the **Indigenous Community of San Francisco Quezaltepeque** to their assembly and election of a new leadership board. Hundreds of people attended to celebrate the work of the current board and indigenous authorities and to conclude the 2025 activities, as well as to kick off the new year. As part of this event, a ceremony and reception for Saint Francis of Assisi Visitor was held to invoke good energy and the Maya calendar. A copy of the land title from the 19th century was also presented, which proves that the land belongs to the community. The assembly concluded with the election of the association's new board for the year 2026.



[solo mi caso](#), La Hora, 29 Jul 2025.

⁸ We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

⁹ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>

- We accompanied the **Peaceful Resistance of the Poqomam People of Chinautla** to three technical meetings, which stem from a legal ruling that holds the Municipality of Chinautla responsible for water pollution in the region. Two of the meetings sought to guarantee the water supply to the Poqomam community of Chinautla. These spaces are essential to ensure the fulfillment of the human right to water, especially considering that the community currently lacks access to drinking water in their homes. Various relevant authorities attended these meetings; however, the Municipality of Chinautla did not attend, even though it is the entity responsible, as established in the court ruling. The third meeting was aimed at initiating a technical and strategic plan to ensure compliance with the ruling. These meetings represent a first step toward identifying solutions, though significant challenges remain in ensuring that the community can fully exercise its right to a healthy environment.



- As part of our support for the **National Network for the Defense of Food Sovereignty in Guatemala (REDSAG)**, we visited the southern coast. During the visit, we observed how the sugar harvest (burning the sugarcane) affects the Pajales Sis community. This practice seriously affects the health of the people living in the area and has major environmental impacts, including persistent breathing problems, ash falling on homes and businesses, air pollution, and the burning of crops planted along riverbanks. These practices are evidence of ongoing rights violations and severe environmental degradation. The meeting also provided an opportunity to follow up on the security situation of the individuals and communities we accompany who are defending their territory, in a context characterized by structural risks and the absence of effective protection measures.



- We accompanied the **Indigenous Council of Olopa** to a meeting with the Municipality of Olopa. The meeting took place in the office of Mayor Óscar Medardo Cardona Noguera and focused on addressing issues related to territorial defense. Our presence was in strict accordance with the principles of non-interference, non-violence, and non-partisanship that govern our work. In this context, as in the aforementioned roundtables, or in any other meeting where we accompany human rights defenders, we fully respect the organization's autonomy, remaining outside the meeting space and reaffirming our commitment to promoting violence-free spaces for dialogue.

3. 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 continuing legal proceedings against Rubén Darío Morales García, a former member of the Presidential General Staff (EMP), in the **Gerardi case**. Morales García is accused of giving false testimony and of acting as an accomplice in the 1998 murder of Monsignor Gerardi. The hearing was held during the evidentiary phase of the intermediate stage. Expert reports were presented as evidence, which could help establish whether the murder of Monsignor Gerardi was part of a special Army intelligence operation. The judge admitted the expert reports despite objections from the defense. The hearing continued with the defense presenting evidence. The judge admitted some of pieces of evidence, while rejecting others due to the prosecution's objections that they were repetitive and excessive. The judge concluded the hearing by declaring the end of the evidentiary phase. She called on the First High Risk Criminal Court D to schedule the opening of the oral and public hearing.

4. 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 Guatemalan authorities, this month we met with Fernando Mazariegos, **Governor of the Department of Retalhuleu**.

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

This month we published a new **ACÉRCATE podcast** dedicated to the work of indigenous and ancestral authorities and mayors, specifically we focus on the indigenous mayor's office of Chisec. To do this, we spoke with Mayor Zoila Caal Tot: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/es/multimedia/ac%C3%A9rcate-podcast>



We also publish a new **People's Bulletin n° 18** that presents experiences and advice for the **protection of groups, organizations and communities** that face threats for defending their rights: <https://shorturl.at/9jGPM>



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.

PBI Guatemala's European Representative met with:

- Rose Aurore Luna Leal, Coordinator for Circular Economy in Latin America and the Caribbean, Guatemala Coordinator, **European Commission, DG INTPA**.
- Karl Giacinti, Political Officer responsible for the Americas and Asia at the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) of the European Commission
- Garance Tardieu, advisor to the group of the Greens in the **European Parliament** on Latin American issues.
- Tomás Reyes Ortega, Chair of the Working Party on Latin America and the Caribbean (**COLAC**) of the Council of the European Union, and Miguel Ramos, COLAC coordinator.

She also participated in the Civil Society Dialogue on Latin America and Caribbean organized by the **European Commission's DG Trade**.

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.



Comunidad Indígena de Quezaltepeque

Quezaltepeque, Chiquimula, Guatemala, C.A.

Al Pueblo Maya Ch'orti'

A los Pueblos Indígenas de Iximulew (Guatemala) A las autoridades del gobierno de Guatemala

A la comunidad nacional e internacional

COMUNICA

La Comunidad Indígena San Francisco Quezaltepeque y el Consejo de Autoridades Ancestrales de Quezaltepeque, del Pueblo Maya Chort'i, gozan que son sujetos de derechos con respaldo del bloque jurídico nacional e internacional, para ejercer su autonomía, su autogobierno, dirigir su propio desarrollo y la administración de sus tierras y recursos.

Los días seis de enero de cada año, el Pueblo Maya Chort'i de Quezaltepeque, previa convocatoria abierta a todas las personas que lo integran, celebra asamblea comunitaria para rendir cuentas de sus acciones y presentar planes de trabajo anual.

En asambleas de años anteriores, se presentaron algunos incidentes que se resolvieron pacíficamente mediante procedimientos propios de la Comunidad Indígena y el Consejo de Autoridades Ancestrales. La asamblea de este año, estuvo precedida de una campaña de difamación, amenazas, persecución, discriminación racial a la Comunidad, y difamación al Consejo de Autoridades acusando a uno de sus miembros de robo de documentos, con lo que ponen en riesgo su integridad física y vida misma, irrespeto a los elementos sagrados como la imagen de San Francisco Conquistador, y a la espiritualidad que se practica en las Cofradías, utilizando direcciones de redes sociales creadas anónimamente desde la municipalidad de Quezaltepeque, campaña que continúa a la fecha. La municipalidad llegó al extremo de mal utilizar a algunos COCODES (que son estructuras de participación ciudadana comunitaria, NO supeditadas a la autoridad municipal), cuyos dirigentes lamentablemente son miembros de la Comunidad Indígena, a quienes manipula y utiliza como infiltrados municipales y causar caos e ingobernabilidad en la asamblea comunitaria, y en las propias comunidades. La municipalidad ha estado adjudicando tierras patrimonio de la comunidad a personas particulares, para lo cual no tiene ninguna autoridad, acto ilegal con lo que provoca inseguridad jurídica, pérdida de la tierra, ingobernabilidad territorial, y actos de represión en contra del Pueblo Maya Ch'orti', lo cual está debidamente documentado.

Como Comunidad Indígena y Consejo de Autoridades Ancestrales:

1. Condenamos enérgicamente la posición colonialista de la municipalidad de Quezaltepeque y su política de discriminación y el despojo y venta de las tierras comunales.
2. Denunciamos la utilización de redes sociales con direcciones anónimas administradas por empleados de la municipalidad de Quezaltepeque.
3. Hacemos responsable a la municipalidad de Quezaltepeque, de cualquier agresión física y psicológica, amenazas, y hasta muerte que puedan sufrir los miembros de la Comunidad Indígena, especialmente sus dirigentes y Autoridades Ancestrales.
4. Lamentamos que miembros exdirectivos de la Comunidad Indígena, que hoy ostentan cargos en los COCODES, sean fieles y obedientes servidores de la municipalidad y actúen en contra del Pueblo Maya Chort'i de Quezaltepeque.
5. Nos reservamos el derecho de presentar en el futuro las denuncias que correspondan contra la municipalidad de Quezaltepeque y personas bajo su mando, ante instancias nacionales e internacionales de aplicación de la justicia y de derechos humanos de los Pueblos Indígenas.

Pueblo Maya Chort'i de Quezaltepeque, 09 de enero de 2026.

The team of volunteers in PBI Guatemala is currently composed of Sheron Ribeiro da Silva (Brazil), Ambroise Lavigne (France), Nelly Horvath (Hungary), Ericka Stephania López Mota (Mexico), Nataly Navarro (Mexico) and María Moreno Hurtado (Spain).

All photos published are from PBI

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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