



## Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 269 - February 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.*

#### **National Day of Dignification for the Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict: Plan for Reparation and Dignification**

On February 25, 1999, the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH), which was created within the framework of one of the Peace Accords, presented its report *Guatemala: Memory of Silence*. This day has been claimed by organizations representing victims and survivors of the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC) as a day to commemorate the memory of the more than 200,000 victims who were killed or disappeared.

On February 25, the Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH) and President Bernardo Arévalo invited members of these organizations and families searching for their loved ones to the National Palace of Culture to commemorate this day, remember the historic ruling handed down 10 years ago in the Sepur Zarco case, and present the Plan for Reparation and Dignity to the National Platform of Victims' Organizations. This plan is the result of a dialogue process between COPADEH and the Platform that lasted two years. In her speech, Demecia Yat, representative of the Grandmothers of Sepur Zarco, called for the reparations measures included in the Sepur Zarco ruling, now a final judgment, to be implemented.

Feliciana Macario, member of the National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA) and representative of the National Platform of Victims, reaffirmed her commitment as a survivor, saying, "We keep alive the memory of our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons who were sacrificed because of contempt, hatred, and racism towards indigenous peoples. We continue to remember them and miss them." She called on the State to renew commitments made under the Peace Accords to provide assistance to victims of serious human rights violations perpetrated during the IAC, commitments that were neglected by previous administrations. The Plan for Reparation and Dignity is an important step toward fulfilling the rights of thousands of victims. However, there is concern that this administration only has two years left to implement the plan, while the surviving victims, most of whom are very elderly, continue to pass away. What the surviving victims want is for the plan to not just remain on paper, but "to reach the victims who need it most: the grandmothers and grandfathers, and the women who suffered sexual violence."

Another aspect that needs to be promoted is a plan to search for the disappeared and to preserve historical memory. "The search for the disappeared is still a debt owed to the public; their families deserve to know what happened to their loved ones and to find and recover their remains," because the mourning process cannot end until they are found. As for the preservation of memory, children and young people have the right to know about the past in order to work for a democratic state and to prevent the horrors of the past from being repeated.

In his speech, President Arévalo pledged that his government would bring the plan to life, saying, "Dignifying the victims means recognizing their lives, valuing their sacrifice, acknowledging that they had names, dreams, and families. Their absence creates an irreparable void in our social fabric, and their sacrifice must not be erased by forgetting. (...) We also need social justice; we need to address the social and economic conditions in which the majority of our people live, and which gave rise to the conflict."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Government of Guatemala, [Commemoración al Día Nacional de la Dignidad de las Víctimas del Conflicto Armado Interno](#), broadcast on YouTube, 25 Feb 2026.

To conclude the event, the president presented a copy of the Plan to Juan Pérez, a member of the National Platform of Victims' Organizations of the IAC. Meanwhile, outside the Palace, hundreds gathered to hold a ceremony and press conference. They reiterated their demand for the state and the nomination committees not to appoint people who have hindered victims' access to justice to positions in the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and the Constitutional Court (CC), specifically naming Roberto Molina Barreto and Consuelo Porras.<sup>2</sup>

### Update on serious cases of criminalization

With elections underway to renew the high courts and the head of the MP, a process that is expected to curb the use of the justice system to silence political opponents, a series of judicial rulings have been handed down in criminalization cases against journalists, former justice operators, and indigenous leaders.

On February 10, the CC upheld the sentences against indigenous authorities Rigoberto Juárez Mateo and Bernardo Ermitaño López Reyes, who were sentenced to 8 and 24 years in prison, respectively. With this decision, the highest court shut down the last legal avenue for overturning these convictions, which have been denounced by civil society and human rights organizations as part of a process of criminalization against both indigenous leaders.<sup>3</sup> These two leaders, defenders of the Maya Q'anjob'al territory of Santa Cruz Barillas in the north of the department of Huehuetenango, are known for their peaceful struggle against the construction of a hydroelectric dam, which has been under judicial review since 2015. To learn more about this case, we recommend reading the article: [Criminalization of Ancestral Authorities in Guatemala: The Case of Rigoberto Juárez and Ermitaño López](#), part of PBI Bulletin 54.

Because of a similar issue, in Yichk'isis, a Maya Chuj, Q'anjob'al, and Akateko region in San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango, 49-year-old rights defender Francisco Mateo Mateo, a merchant from the village of Pojom, was arrested. Mateo Mateo was arrested in Guatemalan territory, near Orizaba, Chiapas, Mexico, while buying corn to resell in his community. The detainee stated that he is being charged with murder, a crime he insists he did not commit and believes to be part of a fabricated case against him. His lawyer, Juan Castro, from the Indigenous Peoples' Law Firm, said that Francisco Mateo Mateo has spoken out about criminalization processes against himself and other territorial defenders. These processes are linked to the imposition of hydroelectric dam construction in the Yichk'isis region. The conflict intensified in 2017, as the state responded to community struggle and resistance with repression.<sup>4</sup>

On February 12, the Second Criminal Trial Court granted alternative measures to journalist José Rubén Zamora, allowing him to remain free while the legal proceedings against him continue. He had been imprisoned for 1,295 days due to two court cases against him, which analysts and international observers have described as retaliation against Zamora, founder of *el Periódico*, a media outlet known for investigating acts of corruption by several previous administrations. Judge Máximo Morales ruled that the time Zamora spent in pretrial detention was longer than the sentences for the crimes of which he is accused in the second case against him, agreeing with one of the arguments put forward by the defense.<sup>5</sup>

In the criminalization case against Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán, former indigenous authorities of the 48 *Cantones of Totonicapán*, the Third Chamber of Criminal Appeals decided to transfer the case to the Seventh Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Fredy Orellana. The Foundation Against Terrorism sought the recusal of the judge assigned to the case, a move that was strongly criticized by the defense and civil society organizations. The Third Chamber's decision caused consternation in the international community and the Guatemalan government. The European Union stated that this is a case of the "weaponization of justice" and called for due process to be respected. The EU maintains that defending democracy through peaceful demonstrations is not grounds for criminal prosecution and calls for a fair trial for Pacheco and Chaclán.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, Stuardo Campo, a former prosecutor charged in three cases, who has been in pretrial detention for 26 months, had an intermediate phase hearing in the Zolic case. The judge decided to accept the joint plaintiff Hostin Rubí Dávila Pivaral, a former employee of the Santo Tomás de Castilla Free Trade Zone (Zolic), who was

<sup>2</sup> López, J., [Víctimas del Conflicto Armado Interno rechazan reelección de Roberto Molina Barreto y de Consuelo Porras](#), ePinvestiga, 25 Feb 2026.

<sup>3</sup> Valdéz, A., [CC ratifica condena contra Rigoberto Juárez y Ermitaño López, autoridades indígenas de Huehuetenango](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 10 Feb 2026.

<sup>4</sup> Botón, S., [Detienen a comunitario que se opuso a hidroeléctricas en San Mateo Ixtatán](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 18 Feb 2026.

<sup>5</sup> Aguilar, D., [Juzgado otorga arresto domiciliario a Jose Rubén Zamora y recupera su libertad](#), ePinvestiga, 12 Feb 2026.

<sup>6</sup> Aguilar, D., [Gobierno y UE cuestionan que caso contra Pacheco y Chaclán sea asignado a Fredy Orellana](#), ePinvestiga, 11 Feb 2026.

sentenced to eight years in prison after being found guilty of ongoing money and asset laundering. The judge also ruled that Campo will participate in the following hearings via videoconference from the Mariscal Zavala prison. At the next hearing, on March 5, the court will hear new motions and review coercive measures.<sup>7</sup>

### Supreme Court reverses decision to remove mayor of Santiago Atitlán

The Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) decided to stay the removal of Francisco Coché as mayor of Santiago Atitlán, Sololá, granting him a provisional injunction. This measure stays the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's (TSE) decision from last October, made at the request of the local ancestral authorities, who accused Coché of corruption. Coché was removed from office following this request, which was accompanied by mass demonstrations convened by the municipality's ancestral authorities with the support of the local population.<sup>8</sup> By staying the ruling, the court is allowing Coché to resume his duties, a move opposed by the people of Santiago Atitlán.

As a result, the Tz'utujil people gathered in front of the MP headquarters on February 11 to voice their discontent. "This is a mockery of the will of the Tz'utujil people of Santiago Atitlán by the Supreme Court of Justice," said Diego Petzey, secretary of the *Cabecera del Pueblo Tz'utujil*. The ancestral authorities of Santiago Atitlán also demanded that the National Civil Police (PNC) provide them with information about any arrest warrants, given that the MP has declared cases confidential and there is concern that the indigenous leaders may be criminalized, as has happened to other leaders in the past.<sup>9</sup>

While the MP takes secretive action against the ancestral authorities who are defending their municipality, MP investigations of corruption allegations against Coché remain stalled. In the days following the CSJ's ruling, suspicions of arrest warrants against the ancestral authorities of Santiago Atitlán were confirmed by an internal source within the MP, who claimed that arrest warrants had been issued against members of the Cabecera for various complaints against them, ranging from the takeover of the municipality to the removal of pollution-causing cages from Lake Atitlán.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. ACCOMPANIMENTS<sup>11</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>12</sup>*

### THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY



This month, as part of our efforts in the struggle against impunity, we accompanied Marta and Mirtala Hernández (**Luz Leticia's** sisters) to two communities where they met with survivors of the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC). Luz Leticia Hernández Agustín was a victim of forced disappearance in 1982. The main defendant in her case is Juan Francisco Cifuentes Cano. He is the former commander of the Special Operations and Reaction Battalion (BROE). The hearing to bring new charges in this case, scheduled for February 18, was suspended as a result of an appeal for reversal filed by the defense.

<sup>7</sup> Verdad y Justicia, [#CasoZolic #StuardoCampo](#), Facebook post, 16 Feb 2026.

<sup>8</sup> See Current Situation of the Month from MIP 265, October 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Valdéz, A., [CSJ suspende destitución de Francisco Coché como alcalde de Santiago Atitlán, Sololá](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 11 Feb 2026.

<sup>10</sup> Sapalú, L., [El pueblo Tz'utujil de Santiago Atitlán resiste y se une frente a criminalización y persecución de sus autoridades ancestrales](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 23 Feb 2026.

<sup>11</sup> We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

<sup>12</sup> 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, as part of our efforts for territorial defense, we accompanied:

- The **Peaceful Resistance of the Poqomam People of Chinautla** to an event called the “Day of Forgiveness.” The event took place in the plaza of Santa Cruz Chinautla. Organized by civil society actors, its goal was to recognize the damage caused by pollution in Chinautla and ask Mother Earth for forgiveness. A number of civil society actors and Guatemalan authorities took part. During the event, several members of the Resistance spoke about the current situation in Chinautla and stressed the importance of not allowing future generations to live in such conditions. National and indigenous authorities signed a letter of commitment to care for Chinautla, which was presented to the “Queens of Culture,” girls from Chinautla, as a token of their commitment to the children of the community and a better future for Chinautla.



- Community journalist **Carlos Choc** to a meeting with a women's cooperative from five communities in El Estor (Izabal). The purpose of the meeting was to learn about the cooperative's work and interview the women. The cooperative has done significant work for its community. In fact, the women have developed a communal savings and loan system, generating economic independence at the community level. Carlos Choc seeks to use his journalism to raise awareness of this initiative and help it gain recognition from local authorities.



## 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.*



On February 25, we observed the **official ceremony for the National Day of Dignification for the Victims of the IAC**. This date also marked the 10th anniversary of the historic ruling in the [#SepurZarco](#) case. The ceremony was held at the National Palace, with President Bernardo Arévalo in attendance. He presented the Plan for Reparation and Dignification for Victims, which includes a mechanism to search for the thousands of people disappeared during the IAC. Meanwhile, in front of the Palace, many organizations of surviving victims reaffirmed their commitment and demanded the prompt and effective implementation of the plan. They also called on the nomination committees not to elect

jurists who have obstructed victims’ pursuit of truth and justice to the courts and the MP.

## 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.*

As part of our dialogue with the diplomatic corps and international organizations, this month we met with Jennifer Echevarría, an official from the **Delegation of the European Union to Guatemala**.

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

- Kevin Estrada, Special Advisor, and Alexandra Alí, Human Rights Advisor to the **Ministry of the Interior**.
- The Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (**COPADEH**) in Izabal.
- Carlos Tenaz Martínez, **Departmental Governor of Izabal**.
- Het Waldemar Barrera, **Assistant Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) in Izabal**.
- Genaro Ico Cholom, **Mayor of El Estor**.
- Ana Lucía Campos Meléndez, Head of Public Outreach and Promotion of Human Rights and Public Policy at **COPADEH**.

## 5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

This month we published **Bulletin 54**, which contains the following articles: *Transitional Justice in Guatemala: Setbacks and Uncertainties*; *Criminalization of Ancestral Authorities in Guatemala: The Case of Rigoberto Juárez and Ermitaño López*; *News About Our Work: Accompaniment for Carlos Ernesto Choc, Maya Q'eqchi' Journalist*. You can find it here: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/multimedia/bulletin>



PODCAST  
**ACÉRCATE**



al Día Nacional de la Dignificación de las Víctimas del Conflicto Armado Interno

Nos comparte sus palabras **Rosalina Tuyuc**

We also recorded a new episode of our **podcast, ACÉRCATE**, which we dedicated to the National Day of Dignification for the Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict. We spoke with **Rosalina Tuyuc**. Listen to it here: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/es/noticias/ac%C3%A9rcate-podcast-10>

## 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:

- Francesco Greco, Guatemala desk of the **European External Action Service**.
- Garance Tardieu, Latin American advisor to the group of the Greens in the **European Parliament**.

## 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.

### COMUNICADO

#### DÍA NACIONAL DE LA DIGNIDAD DE LAS VÍCTIMAS DEL CONFLICTO ARMADO INTERNO

Como cada 25 de febrero, las víctimas y sobrevivientes del conflicto armado interno nos reunimos en diferentes regiones del país, para honrar la memoria de nuestros seres queridos muertos y desaparecidos durante las dictaduras militares.

No olvidamos que el Ejército y los grupos paramilitares fueron responsables de las masacres, las desapariciones forzadas, las violaciones sexuales, el secuestro de niñas y niños, y el desplazamiento forzado de miles de miembros de nuestras comunidades.

Las víctimas y sobrevivientes seguimos exigiendo justicia por las atrocidades del conflicto armado, y por eso estamos siguiendo de cerca los procesos de elección de fiscal general y de magistrados de la Corte de Constitucionalidad. No queremos que la justicia siga en manos de personas corruptas y sancionadas internacionalmente.

Por eso repudiamos el cinismo de Consuelo Porras de postularse a fiscal general y del magistrado Roberto Molina Barreto, quien busca ser reelecto en la Corte de Constitucionalidad por el Congreso de la República. Ambos son responsables de obstruir la justicia para las víctimas del conflicto armado y de proteger a militares violadores de derechos humanos.

Por otra parte, después de dos años de diálogo con el Gobierno, finalmente el Presidente Bernardo Arévalo lanzó el Plan de Reparación y Dignificación para las Víctimas del Conflicto Armado Interno; pero hace falta que firme el acuerdo gubernativo para que comience a funcionar. Es triste que cientos de



sobrevivientes estén falleciendo sin recibir una disculpa pública del Estado o algún resarcimiento por el profundo daño que les causó el Ejército.

Asimismo, nos preocupa que el Gobierno siga sin impulsar los planes de búsqueda de personas desaparecidas, de acceso a los archivos históricos y de preservación de la memoria histórica, los cuales son fundamentales para garantizar los derechos de las víctimas y para que la violencia del pasado no se repita.

#### **POR LO ANTERIOR, EXIGIMOS:**

1. **Al presidente Bernardo Arévalo:** que apruebe de urgencia el acuerdo gubernativo para crear el Plan de Reparación y Dignificación.
2. **Al Gobierno de la República:** que cree los planes de búsqueda de personas desaparecidas, de archivos históricos y de memoria histórica.
3. **A la Comisión de Postulación de fiscal general:** que rechace la postulación de Consuelo Porras y de cualquier persona señalada de corrupción o que esté sancionada internacionalmente.
4. **Al Congreso de la República:** que no permita la reelección del magistrado Roberto Molina Barreto, ni de ningún magistrado de la actual Corte de Constitucionalidad.

Hacemos un llamado a la sociedad guatemalteca para unimos para la liberación del sistema de justicia. Como Plataforma Nacional de Víctimas reiteramos nuestro compromiso con la democracia y la paz, y con la defensa de los derechos a la verdad, la justicia, la reparación y la no repetición. **¡Por la dignidad de las víctimas!**

Guatemala, Chimaltenango, Cobán, Nebaj, Patulul, Rabinal,  
Santa Cruz del Quiché y Uspantán; 25 de febrero de 2026



## AUTORIDADES INDÍGENAS ANCESTRALES DE IXIMULEW

### GUATEMALA, MESOAMÉRICA.



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**Comunicado 06-26**

### AUTORIDADES INDÍGENAS Y ANCESTRALES DEL ESPACIO NACIONAL DE IXIMULEW

#### DENUNCIA PÚBLICA

1. Denunciamos las acciones de violación a los derechos humanos e irrespeto a los derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas, intimidación y hostigamientos sistemático que la empresa Transportadora de Energía de Centro América S.A. TRECESA, está realizando en contra del pueblo Maya Kaqchikel de la comunidad del Pilar 1, en San Juan Sacatepéquez.
2. El día miércoles 19 de febrero, invadieron propiedad privada, ingresaron a la comunidad del Pilar 1, en San Juan Sacatepéquez, de una forma amenazante, y en complicidad con el Ministerio Público, se pidió acompañamiento policial, lo cual catalogamos como actos de criminalización e intimidación, a su vez, flagrantemente comenten el delito de allanamiento de morada, ya que irrumpieron la propiedad privada, es más en forma ilegal los trabajadores de la empresa ingresaron mediante uso de la fuerza, cortando los materiales que resguardaban e impedían el ingreso a propiedad privada y dañaron los cultivos, tal y como se puede observar en los videos que ya circulan en diferentes medios de comunicación.
3. Exigimos a la empresa Transportadora de Energía de Centro América S.A. TRECESA a abstenerse en invadir propiedad privada y en complicidad con el Ministerio Público, utilizan la fuerza pública para intimidar a los vecinos que están organizados para defender sus derechos constitucionalmente reconocidos.
4. Las Autoridades Indígenas articuladas al espacio Nacional de Iximulew, daremos el acompañamiento a nuestros hermanos de las comunidades afectadas por esta empresa TRECESA, y presentar las denuncias correspondientes.

**Ciudad de Guatemala, 19 de febrero 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) and María Moreno Hurtado (Spain).

*All photos published are from PBI*

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**GUATEMALA PROJECT  
PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

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