



## Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 270 - March 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.*

#### **OHCHR releases its report on the human rights situation in Guatemala**

In early March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published its report on the situation in Guatemala, highlighting progress made in terms of equality, non-discrimination, and sustainable and inclusive development. However, concerns remain regarding violations of women's and indigenous peoples' rights. Discrimination and systemic racism continue to impact the full enjoyment of the rights of indigenous peoples, Garifuna, and people of African descent. The report also emphasizes the misuse of criminal law to restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, highlighting direct attacks against indigenous leaders such as Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán. Both men have been in pretrial detention for a year, charged with terrorism and other crimes, because they lead the 2023 protests to defend the election results and, ultimately, democracy. Additionally, two other indigenous leaders have been indicted in the same case. For the High Commissioner, these repressive actions instill public fear of protesting and encourage journalists to self-censor out of fear of potential charges. The report documents at least 1,465 attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, and justice operators; most were committed by state actors in the justice sector.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Evictions and criminalization of indigenous peoples<sup>2</sup>**

Alongside the presentation of the OHCHR report, PBI Switzerland organized the event *"Guatemala: Challenges and Recommendations for Guaranteeing the Right to Adequate Housing."* The panel included the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, and human rights defender and UVOC member Sandra Calel, who is accompanied by PBI. The Special Rapporteur, who visited Guatemala last year, recommended that the State immediately declare a moratorium on evictions, legally recognize the territorial rights of indigenous peoples, and protect human rights defenders.

Meanwhile, in Guatemala City, on March 10, several international organizations presented the findings of the study *"Eviction and Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala: The Role of the Public Prosecutor's Office."* The report identifies the so-called "liberal agrarian reform," carried out during the governments of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as one of the roots of the problem. Its policies led to the widespread expropriation of indigenous territories and the forced assimilation of indigenous inhabitants of these territories as plantation workers." "Public lands or lands without a registered owner were given to private parties on the condition that they invest in agricultural production." Thus, the policies "granted a significant portion of the national territory to a limited number of new plantation owners who, together with the traditional landowning oligarchy, ended up concentrating most of the country's land into a few hands."

The analysis highlights the disproportionate increase in eviction orders against communities and arrest warrants against peasant farmers living on lands claimed by large plantation owners and companies, without any historical investigation into the ownership of those lands. This has led to extremely dire situations that

<sup>1</sup> Aguilar, D., [Presentan informe sobre derechos humanos en Guatemala ante Consejo de la ONU](#), ePInvestiga, 27 Feb 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Indigenous Peoples' Law Firm et. al., [Eviction and Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala: The Role of the Public Prosecutor's Office](#), March 2026.

profoundly affect the peasant families targeted. In light of this situation, the report concludes that the Guatemalan State—to name just some issues—“is violating its constitutional and international obligations” by “imposing a series of legal and institutional barriers to the recognition and titling of indigenous territories... leaving indigenous peoples completely defenseless against criminal charges of trespass and judicial evictions brought by companies and individuals who claim ownership over their territories.” Likewise, one of its most notable recommendations calls on the Public Prosecutor’s Office (MP) to “conduct a comprehensive review of institutional policy on investigation and criminal prosecution to ensure that criminal proceedings are not used as the first resort for resolving disputes over land rights, ownership, or tenure, especially in cases involving territories claimed by indigenous peoples on the basis of historical or ancestral rights.”

It also recommends that the MP refrain from “requesting arrest warrants and forced evictions as an automatic or intimidatory measure and review the use of the presumption of *in flagrante delicto* in trespass cases, in order to avoid broad interpretations that violate the right to personal liberty and due process.”

### March 8: International Women's Day

As they do each year on March 8, hundreds of women took to the streets of Guatemala City’s historic center and several departmental capitals, raising their voices against the increasing rate of teenage pregnancies, the state’s failure to protect women, and the takeover of the University of San Carlos’s president’s office by Walter Mazariegos, who is doing everything in his power to remain in office. They also denounced the atrocities of the wars in Palestine and Iran and the murder of children in the bombings.<sup>3</sup>

According to data from the National Registry of Persons (RENAP), last year there were 56,889 births to mothers between the ages of 10 and 19, most of them in the departments of Alta Verapaz and Guatemala. In 2018, 77,700 were recorded. Over the past seven years, Guatemala has reduced births from child and teenage pregnancies by 26.8%. Ximena Aguilar, Political Advocacy Coordinator at Incidejoven, an organization defending sexual and reproductive rights in Guatemala, explains that early pregnancies are due to a combination of factors, including high levels of sexual violence, high poverty rates, early sexual activity, as well as a lack of comprehensive sex education and access to contraceptives. “One of the structural barriers in Guatemala is that it is a deeply sexist and patriarchal country,” says Aguilar, “This leads to violent behavior that is normalized in the everyday lives of girls and teens and is exacerbated by poverty and inequality.” According to RENAP data, 33,054 of the births in 2025 were to mothers between the ages of 10 and 17. Of these, 2,611 were between the ages of 10 and 14. As for the fathers, only 17.3% (5,714) were also minors. In 22% of the cases, there is no record of the father’s age or identity.

[According to the World Bank](#), Guatemala has the fifth-highest rate of teenage pregnancies among girls aged 15 to 19 in Latin America, with 68 cases for every 1,000 girls in that age group—15 points above the regional average of 52—and trailing only Nicaragua, Honduras, Guyana, and Paraguay.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of how March 8 was observed at the departmental level, Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, stands out: there, survivors from the Mujeres Achí case and human rights organizations reinstalled a mural dedicated to the indigenous women who reported sexual assaults committed during Guatemala’s internal armed conflict. The mural is part of the reparations ordered by the courts in this landmark case. Two rulings—issued in 2022 and 2025—convicted former Civil Defense Patrolmen (PAC) of sexual violence and crimes against humanity committed between 1981 and 1985. For the Maya Achí women survivors, the mural symbolizes public recognition of their truth after decades of silence, stigmatization, and denial of the crimes committed during the genocide carried out by the *de facto* governments of General Romeo Lucas García and General José Efraín Ríos Montt, in power from 1978 to 1983. The mural also represents an act of collective dignity, as the images recall the violence they endured while simultaneously highlighting the resilience of the women who spoke out about what happened, their struggle for justice, and a message for future generations: the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war must never be repeated. The mural was restored after the Rabinal municipal government removed the original painting on July 22, 2025, covering it with yellow paint.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ramón, S., “¡Perdonen la molestia, nos están asesinando!”, [mujeres alzan la voz contra la violencia](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 8 Mar 2026.

<sup>4</sup> Rodríguez, P., [Las niñas de Guatemala no conocen la primavera](#), ojoconmipisto.com, 05 Mar 2026.

<sup>5</sup> Botón, S., [La memoria de las mujeres Achi’ vuelve a ser honrada con la reinstalación de mural](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 8 Mar 2026.

## New developments in various criminalization cases

Human rights defender Francisco Mateo Mateo, from the village of Pojom in San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango, continues to be criminalized for his involvement in the resistance movement that stood up against the construction of two hydroelectric projects in the Yichk'isis micro-region. After holding Mateo Mateo for more than a month at the Santa Cruz del Quiché Pre-trial Detention Center, the presiding court held his preliminary hearing on March 20. Judge Alberto Calmo Ramírez acquitted Mateo Mateo of the murder charge but indicted him on charges of concealment. He also granted Mateo Mateo alternative measures and gave the MP four months to present its closing arguments. The intermediate phase hearing has been scheduled for August 11, 2026. The charges against Mateo Mateo relate to events that occurred in 2014. His arrest and prosecution are not isolated incidents; on the contrary, in recent years, numerous arrest warrants have been carried out against community members who participated in the resistance against the imposition of hydroelectric dams in the region.<sup>6</sup>

Judge Marjorie René Azpuru Villela of the Fifth Criminal Court scheduled a hearing for April 13 at 9 a.m. to begin the public trial against Maya Kaqchikel activist Nanci Sinto. Sinto has been charged with the crime of destruction of cultural property, allegedly committed during a demonstration that took place on November 21, 2020. The notification came just hours after Sinto filed a challenge against Attorney General Consuelo Porras over her bid to lead the Public Prosecutor's Office for a third term. Sinto was indicted in March 2023. The judge presiding over the intermediate phase, Sonia Carol Martínez Obregón, rejected 20 of the 21 pieces of evidence presented in Sinto's favor, but accepted 55 of the 56 pieces of evidence presented by the MP. In June 2023, following the oral and public hearing, Judge Wendy Coloma ruled to dismiss the case; however, an appeal filed by the MP before the Third Chamber of the Criminal Division for Anti-Narcotics and Environmental Crimes in Guatemala reopened the proceedings against the activist. The proceedings have been deemed a case of criminalization because they stem from a public protest and have targeted individuals critical of the Alejandro Giammattei administration.<sup>7</sup>

There has been no progress in the cases in which former anti-corruption prosecutor Stuardo Campo—who has been held in pretrial detention for 27 months—is facing criminal charges, as the judge has repeatedly postponed hearing dates.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. ACCOMPANIMENTS<sup>9</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>10</sup>*

### THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

This month we visited Alta Verapaz and met with human rights defenders **Lesbia Artola** and **Imelda Teyul**. Both women are working to support indigenous and peasant women who face evictions and criminalization, putting them in a precarious security situation.

We also met with the **Verapaz Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)** to follow up on their security situation and their work to defend land access.

<sup>6</sup> García, A., Defensor del territorio en Huehuetenango queda ligado a proceso por encubrimiento propio, Prensa Comunitaria, 20 Mar 2026.

<sup>7</sup> Ramón, S., [Fijan fecha para juicio de Nanci Sinto tras presentar tacha contra Consuelo Porras](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 16 Mar 2026.

<sup>8</sup> Factor4, [Caso Zolic: Línea de Tiempo de los Aplazamientos de Audiencias de Stuardo Campo](#), Facebook, 18 Mar 2026.

<sup>9</sup> We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

<sup>10</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 focus on territorial defense, we accompanied:

- The **Peaceful Resistance of the Poqomam People of Chinautla** during the Ministry of Energy and Mines' (MEM) visit to the community of Santa Cruz Chinautla. The MEM's visit sought to address socioeconomic issues affecting the community, which has been impacted by extractive projects in the region. The Resistance has struggled for several years to secure recognition of its right to live in a healthy environment—a right that is threatened by the sand mining projects operating in the Santa Cruz Chinautla region, which have serious consequences for the environment and the community's health.
- The **Indigenous Community of San Francisco Quezaltepeque**, whom we visited in the department of Chiquimula. We held a meeting in which they updated us on their work and their security situation.



- Members of the **Maya Ch'orti' Indigenous Council of Olopa** to a workshop organized by the PROCLADE (Claretian Promotion of Development) Foundation in Guatemala City. The workshop aimed to bring together representatives from communities affected by extractive industries—or those that might be affected in the future—to share tools and best practices for defending their rights. These workshops are organized as part of the Guardians of the Common Home Project, which aims to empower people living in poverty—especially indigenous women and youth—to freely promote and defend sustainable development models in their territories, exercising their right to food and strengthening their climate resilience, dignity, and quality of life.

- José Miguel, a member of the **National Network for the Defense of Food Sovereignty in Guatemala (REDSAG)**, to a hearing against the El Pilar sugar mill, which is accused of polluting and diverting the river in the community of Pajales Sis. The hearing, which took place at the Multi-Person Trial Court for Criminal Matters, Drug Trafficking, and Environmental Crimes in Retalhuleu, was the continuation of a lawsuit filed against the sugar mill over the serious consequences its activities have on the environment and public health in the community. The hearing took place with a representative from the El Pilar sugar mill present; however, José Miguel, a human rights defender and plaintiff in the case, and his legal representative, were not allowed to enter the courtroom where the hearing was held.



This March, we began accompanying **Narciso Marcos Chegüén**, a human rights defender and independent community journalist with more than 13 years of experience covering issues related to the Maya Ch'orti' people's defense of their territory. His journalistic work focuses on highlighting both the progress made in the department of Chiquimula and the human rights violations faced by communities in the region. As a result of his work, he began to receive constant threats, censorship attempts, and intimidation directed at him and his family, as well as surveillance, which led the Ministry of the Interior to grant him perimeter security measures. As a result of this situation, he was forced to temporarily pause his journalistic work, which he is now resuming.

### 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.*



We attended the **14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Peaceful Resistance of La Puya**, Hundreds of people attended, taking part in fun activities and adding their voices to the Resistance's calls to end mining and corruption. The event also served as an opportunity to celebrate the arbitration decision issued last December, which rejected the mining company's suit against Guatemala. The Resistance's participation was crucial to this process.

### 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 engagement with Guatemalan authorities, this month we met with the International Relations team at the **National Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH)** and with Brenda del Cid, mayor of the **Municipality of Chinautla**.

### 5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

On the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of this month, we organized a **healing gathering** that took place in Chamelco, Alta Verapaz. The gathering was facilitated by the TZ'KAT Network of Ancestral Healers of Territorial Community Feminism from Iximulew. Twenty-four indigenous women rights defenders from various resistance movements and organizations in Alta Verapaz participated.

### 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:

- Cecilia Neyroud, Head of the Peace and Human Rights, Latin America, and Human Rights Defenders Program in the Human Rights Department of the **Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs**.
- Lucía Chicote, political officer at the **Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations in Geneva**.
- Pierre Minard, political officer at the **Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations in Geneva**.
- Therese Arnesen, human rights officer in the "Land and Environment" section of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

- Stee-Marto Asbjornsen, an expert on the United Nations working group on peasants, and Francisco Alfonzo, a human rights officer at the **Office of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples**.
- Sonia Cuesta, a human rights officer at the Secretariat of the **United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights**.
- Nathalie Migeotte, Country Officer for Guatemala at the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva**.
- Balakrishnan Rajagopal, **Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing**, as well as Mariya Stoyanova and Gunnar Theissen, human rights officers from his office.
- Jose Cepeda, **Spanish MEP from the S&D group** in the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Central America.
- Cristina Guarda, **Italian MEP from the group of the Greens** in the European Parliament and member of the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, along with Sara Pettinelli, her assistant.
- Joseline Tuyisabe, **policy advisor to the Dutch MEP** Catarina Vieira of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament, member of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and of the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly.

## 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

#### RECHAZAMOS LA POSTULACIÓN DE CONSUELO PORRAS PARA FISCAL GENERAL

Las víctimas y sobrevivientes del conflicto armado interno presentamos una tacha en contra de la fiscal general Consuelo Porras porque no cumple los requisitos de idoneidad y reconocida honorabilidad que exige la Constitución Política de Guatemala.

Consuelo Porras ha negado la justicia a las víctimas del conflicto armado, ha desmantelado la Fiscalía de Derechos Humanos y ha obstaculizado investigaciones de casos emblemáticos como el Diario Militar, CREOMAPAZ y Genocidio Ixil, con el propósito de proteger a los militares responsables de estos crímenes.

Además, ha desobedecido sentencias de la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos que ordenan investigar casos de violaciones graves ocurridas en el conflicto armado.

Asimismo, informamos a la Comisión de Postulación que Consuelo Porras está involucrada en un caso de adopciones ilegales de niños durante el conflicto armado, cuando fue directora del Hogar Temporal Elisa Martínez en 1982, según lo dio a conocer el Grupo de Trabajo de las Naciones Unidas sobre Desapariciones Forzadas.

La Comisión de Postulación debe pedir información adicional sobre estos señalamientos, y exigirle a Consuelo Porras que presente explicaciones y pruebas sobre estos hechos.



Para la Plataforma Nacional de Víctimas, Consuelo Porras no debe pasar a la nómina final de 6 aspirantes a fiscal general. Sería una vergüenza nacional que una persona sancionada internacionalmente vuelva a ocupar un alto cargo en el sistema de justicia.

Las guatemaltecas y los guatemaltecos tenemos el derecho a una justicia imparcial y efectiva, y no queremos que el Ministerio Público siga cooptado, y protegiendo a los grupos corruptos y los violadores de derechos humanos.

#### **Por lo anterior, exigimos a la Comisión de Postulación**

1. Que tome con seriedad los señalamientos que presentamos en contra de Consuelo Porras y que se pronuncie de viva voz sobre ellos.
2. Que no incluyan a Consuelo Porras en la nómina final de candidatos a fiscal general, y que tampoco incluya a cualquier otro candidato no idóneo o que no goce de reconocida honorabilidad.
3. Que no se deje presionar por grupos de poder para incluir en la nómina final de candidatos, a Consuelo Porras o a cualquier otro candidato sobre el cual pesa una duda razonable en su hoja de vida.

Esperamos que la Comisión de Postulación tenga un papel histórico y que libere al Ministerio Público de las mafias que lo tienen cooptado.

**Guatemala, 12 de marzo 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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