



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 274 – July 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.

USAC: Irregularities continue under Walter Mazariegos's disputed leadership

In July 2026, Walter Mazariegos began a new term as president of the University of San Carlos (USAC) amid widespread criticism. Just as in the previous round of elections, different student groups, faculty members, and university organizations maintain that his continued tenure is the result of a flawed electoral process, citing the exclusion of opposition candidates, the annulment of elections in various academic departments, and changes to the electoral regulations to favor the current administration.¹

New controversy arose in the second half of July when dozens of students reported that their enrollment records, academic transcripts, and administrative records had disappeared from the university's system. The students affected were from different departments, and many of them had participated in movements opposing the Mazariegos administration. Because their records were deleted, some were unable to register for second-semester courses or complete other academic requirements.²

The Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH) reported that it has opened investigations to gather information on the deletion of academic records and to look into other allegations of harassment against students. Meanwhile, the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) has launched investigations based on the complaints that were filed.³

Walter Mazariegos's administration has repeatedly denied the accusations of fraud and political persecution leveled by opposition groups. However, the conflict has fostered a confrontational atmosphere within the university, leading to new lawsuits, public statements, and doubts about university autonomy and guarantees of democratic participation at USAC.⁴

¹ Redacción, [La muerte académica en la Usac y otras similitudes de Walter Mazariegos con la dictadura nicaragüense](#), La Hora, 27 July 2026.

² Ramón, S., [Estudiantes exigen a la USAC restablecer sus registros académicos](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 21.07.2026.

³ Ramón, S., [PDH señala que "recaba información" sobre eliminación de registros estudiantiles y hostigamiento en la USAC](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 23 July 2026.

⁴ La Hora, Op. Cit.

Benedicto Lucas García granted provisional release

Manuel Benedicto Lucas García, who was Army Chief of Staff from August 16, 1981, to March 23, 1982, was granted provisional release on July 15, 2026.⁵ He had been held in pretrial detention at the Military Medical Center, facing charges of genocide against the Maya Ixil people, crimes against humanity, sexual violence, and forced disappearance in more than 1,700 cases committed under the rule of his brother, the late *de facto* president Fernando Romeo Lucas García (1978–1982). The MP sought a 2,860-year prison sentence for these crimes; however, the trial was interrupted just before the verdict was handed down, when an injunction was granted which ordered that the oral and public proceedings be repeated.

High-Risk Court B granted him provisional release on the same day that approximately 300 members of the Maya Kaqchikel community unveiled a mausoleum and communal burial place in the village of Pacoj (Chimaltenango) to honor the 72 victims of a massacre committed by the army in 1982.⁶ The Court granted alternative measures, reasoning that Guatemalan procedural law does not prohibit the Court from granting provisional release to individuals charged with these types of crimes and that pretrial detention should not amount to a preemptive sentence. Some of the measures imposed include house arrest in the home of one of his children, a travel ban, and a ban on communicating with witnesses in the case.

The MP and the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) appealed the decision on July 22, arguing that the Court failed to take into account the serious nature of the charges or the risk of flight or obstruction of the investigation.⁷ In a statement, the AJR called his provisional release a setback for victims' access to justice and warned that the decision prioritizes the rights of the defendant over those of the communities impacted by the crimes in question. The decision to grant provisional release now awaits the outcome of the appeals filed by the parties.⁸

In 2018, Lucas García was sentenced to 58 years in prison for crimes against humanity, forced disappearance, and aggravated rape in the Molina Theissen case. He is also accused of crimes against humanity in the CREOMPAZ case, a clandestine cemetery where more than 500 human remains were found, showing signs of violence.

TRECSA fails to respect the right to consultation in San Juan Sacatepéquez

In February 2026, residents of the indigenous Kaqchikel Aj Bab'ey community of El Pilar 1, in San Juan Sacatepéquez, filed complaints against the company Transportadora de Energía de Centroamérica S.A. (TRECSA), alleging that TRECSA had entered communal lands to install bases for transmission towers without first consulting the community. Community members asserted that the project threatens their ancestral lands, crops, and ways of life, and spoke out about the presence of law enforcement officers while company workers went into the area.

⁵ Rodríguez, S., [Otorgan libertad provisional a Benedicto Lucas García](#), EP Investiga, 15 July 2026.

⁶ Calles, J., [El contraste de la dignidad comunitaria frente al descaro de la impunidad](#), Asociación El Observador 24 July 2026.

⁷ ACAN-EFE, [Apelan beneficio otorgado a Benedicto Lucas, acusado de la muerte de más de mil 200 indígenas ixiles](#), Prensa Libre, 22 July 2026.

⁸ Antonio, R.S., [Organizaciones de derechos humanos condenan decisión judicial de otorgar libertad a Benedicto Lucas](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 15 July 2026.

In the following months, residents of El Pilar 1 reported that TRECSA workers, accompanied by National Civil Police (PNC) officers, private security guards, and MP personnel, once again tried to enter the communal lands. The residents reported that corn and other crops were damaged during these incidents; furthermore, they accused the company of using force to proceed with the installation of electrical infrastructure.

In June 2026, the ancestral authorities of Iximulew expressed their support for the community and demanded that TRECSA withdraw from the communal lands. They also requested that the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) review the permits and authorizations associated with the project, and that state institutions respect the decisions made by the community assemblies. The indigenous authorities spoke out about possible instances of persecution, discrimination, and criminalization against those who oppose the project.⁹

In July 2026, representatives from El Pilar 1 visited the National Palace to ask Bernardo Arévalo's administration to intervene and put a stop to the use of law enforcement in the conflict. At the same time, social organizations and Indigenous communities expressed opposition to bills 6665 and 6712, arguing that they could facilitate electrical infrastructure projects without sufficient safeguards for communal lands. The collectives pointed out that such reforms could increase the risk of harm to indigenous communities and favor private power transmission companies.

For years, many communities have accused TRECSA of trying to operate without the prior and informed consent of the local population. While community leaders continue to resist in order to protect their lands, the conflict persists, prompting calls for dialogue, a review of permits, and respect for the collective rights of the El Pilar 1 community in San Juan Sacatepéquez.¹⁰

The Tz'utujil people of Santiago Atitlán successfully remove the mayor from office

On July 20, the Constitutional Court (CC) denied an injunction filed by Santiago Atitlán (Sololá) Mayor Francisco Coché Pablo, who was elected in 2023, a decision that favored the municipality's residents. The Tz'utujil community, represented by its ancestral authorities, organized a series of peaceful protests and collected signatures to urge the members of the municipal council to ask the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) to remove the mayor from office, due to numerous allegations of corruption.¹¹

In late March 2026, PBI spoke with Juan Mendoza Damián and Diego Petzey, ancestral authorities from the town. They pointed out that the two main reasons for removing the mayor were the illegal installation of around 200 cages for tilapia farming in Lake Atitlán—which pollute the municipality's only source of drinking water—and the authorization of 279 licenses for moto-taxis (or *tuk-tuks*) which were causing serious accidents. Juan and Diego have been threatened and criminalized for their efforts to defend the territory and for their fight against corruption.¹²

On July 1, the ousted mayor showed up in the city center with a contingent of police and shock troops, sparking gunfire that left two people dead and one injured. The ancestral authorities denounced and

⁹ Xol, J., [Comunidad de El Pilar 1 de San Juan Sacatepéquez sigue en su lucha por intromisión de TRECSA](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 23 June 2026.

¹⁰ Xol, J., [Comunidades exigen intervención del Gobierno por conflicto con TRECSA en San Juan Sacatepéquez](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 23 June 2026.

¹¹ Ramón, A., [Autoridades indígenas y el TSE acuerdan proceso para declarar vacante el cargo de alcalde de Santiago Atitlán](#), 11 October 2025.

¹² Para profundizar en la lucha el Pueblo Tz'utujil, invitamos a escuchar nuestro [Acércate Podcast](#), 02 April 2026.

rejected these events and urged all parties to pursue dialogue and peace, calling on state authorities to investigate the incident.¹³

Stuardo Campo's acquittal in the "Alfa Siete" case overturned¹⁴

Stuardo Campo is a former anti-corruption prosecutor who has been in pretrial detention since December 2023, awaiting trial in the three cases against him. In July 2025, the first case, known as "Alfa Siete," ended with an acquittal in his favor; however, on July 13, 2026, the Fourth Appeals Chamber overturned this decision and ordered that the oral and public proceedings be repeated, a decision that Campo's legal team is now challenging. The second case, known as the "Zolic case," is currently in the intermediate phase. That case has kept Campo in pretrial detention, despite his defense team's repeated attempts to secure his release. Since February 2026, 17 intermediate phase hearings have been scheduled, 10 of which have been cancelled. The third case, "Chimaltenango Bypass," began in May 2024. There have been many delays in the indictment phase, and the next phase of the hearings is scheduled for August of this year.

The case of Stuardo Campo is a clear example of the criminalization that many justice operators and human rights defenders face in Guatemala. The United Nations (UN) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention identified five features of criminalization present in his case: "the inability to justify pretrial detention; the violation of due process; the total or partial failure to comply with international standards regarding the right to a fair trial; and discrimination based on his status as an anti-corruption prosecutor." Different national and international human rights organizations have called on Guatemalan authorities to release Stuardo Campo and investigate the details of his case.

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS¹⁵

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.¹⁶

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

This month, we accompanied the family of Luz Leticia during the ongoing oral and public hearing phase of the criminal proceedings against Juan Francisco Cifuentes Cano for the forced disappearance of Luz Leticia Hernández Agustín. For more information on the case, visit: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/who-we-accompany-gt/a-companing-luz-leticia-case>.

The hearings have focused on incorporating and reviewing documentary evidence, presenting expert reports, and hearing witness testimony as part of the trial proceedings. The closing arguments phase is expected to begin in August.



¹³ Sapalú, L., [Cabecera del Pueblo Tz'utujil pide paz y diálogo ante hechos de violencia](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 04 July 2026.

¹⁴ Ramón, A., [Abogados denuncian detención arbitraria de exfiscal Stuardo Campo](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 14 July 2026.

¹⁵ We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

¹⁶ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

On July 21, we met with members of the **Verapaz Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)**, who updated us on their work in the region.

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

This month, we accompanied:

- **Carlos Choc** as he reported on a court hearing in the case against Leocadio Juracán, the criminalized leader of the Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA), which was held in Puerto Barrios, Izabal. Carlos, the CCDA, and other social organizations, such as the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEGUA), were present to show their support for Leocadio in the face of a legal process that he himself has described as an effort to silence him. Through his work, Carlos documents and brings attention to cases of criminalization, like the one against Leocadio, which seek to wear down individuals and organizations struggling for social causes.
- The **National Network for the Defense of Food Sovereignty (REDSAG)** on a visit to the community of Pajales Sis. We also held meetings with various local authorities to call on them to take concrete steps to ensure the safety of REDSAG members.



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.

As part of our engagement with the diplomatic corps and international organizations, this month we met with Mónica Izaguirre, Political and Economic Affairs Officer at the **Canadian Embassy in Guatemala**.

As part of our engagement with Guatemalan authorities, this month we met with:

- **National Civil Police (PNC)** officers in **Tactic**.
- The head of the **PNC substation in San Andrés Villa Seca, Retalhuleu**.
- The municipal secretary of the **municipality of San Andrés Villa Seca, Retalhuleu**.
- Telma Beatriz Gramajo Enriquez, legal and social affairs advisor to the **Departmental Government of Retalhuleu**.
- Nancy Evanury Galindo Gamajo, assistant head of the **PDH in Retalhuleu**.
- The head of **PNC Departmental Police Station No. 34 in Retalhuleu**.
- Roberto Coy, advisor to the Conflict Management Unit of the **Departmental Government of Alta Verapaz**.
- María Fernanda Montalvo, Peace, Justice, and Human Rights outreach worker for the **Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH) in Alta Verapaz**.

- Carlos Guillermo, assistant head of the **PDH in Alta Verapaz**.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

On July 27, we organized another **security and protection workshop for organizations focused on transitional justice, reparations, and historical memory**. The workshop was facilitated by Guatemalan experts in the field. Thirteen women and 14 men from 15 different organizations participated.

5. 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.

This month, PBI Guatemala's European Representative met with:

- Sonia Cuesta, an officer at the **Secretariat of the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights**.
- Camille Le Ho, Guatemala desk officer at the **European External Action Service**.
- Verónica Orru, assistant to an Italian MEP from the S&D political group of the **European Parliament**, and a member of the Delegation for Central America, the Committee on Development, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- Tomás Reyes Ortego, chair of the COLAC Working Group on Latin America of the **Council of the European Union**; Miguel Ramos, coordinator of this group; Aatami Salminen of the **Permanent Representation of Finland**; Augusto Palmieri and Antonio Tria of the **Permanent Representation of Italy**; Peter O'Connor of the **Permanent Representation of Ireland**; Lisette Frandsen Albrechtsen of the **Permanent Representation of Denmark**; and Jurga Prakeitė of the **Permanent Representation of Lithuania** to the EU—all representing their respective countries in the COLAC group.

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.



**La Asociación para la Justicia y la Reconciliación - AJR-,
y la Convergencia por los Derechos Humanos –CDH-:**

Rechazamos categóricamente la resolución emitida por el Tribunal Primero de Sentencia Penal, Narco actividad y Delitos contra el Ambiente pro procesos de mayor Riesgo grupo B, presidido por la Jueza Marlin Mayela Gonzales Arrivillaga, a través de la cual decretó medida sustitutiva y benefició con arresto domiciliario al Acusado, general retirado, Manuel Benedicto Lucas García, dentro del caso por Genocidio, Delitos contra Deberes de Humanidad y Desaparición Forzada en contra del pueblo maya Ixil entre 1978-1982.

En una argumentación contradictoria, la Defensa del acusado pidió medida sustitutiva argumentando padecimientos de salud y avanzada edad, omitiendo deliberadamente que el mismo ha permanecido recluso en el Centro Médico militar, con privilegios y acceso total a la salud, atención psicológica y cuidados geriátricos desde que fue vinculado a este caso en el año 2020.

Nuestras demandas como AJR fueron que, dado que NUNCA ha estado en cárcel común, por los mismos criterios humanitarios y para garantizar los derechos de las víctimas permaneciera en esa condición, para garantizar su comparecencia en el proceso y la tutela judicial efectiva para las víctimas.

Contrario a ello, en una resolución *exprés* redactada en 7 minutos (citando amplia jurisprudencia y mecanismos internacionales) y con el agravante de que el acusado está ligado a otros procesos por graves crímenes como desapariciones forzadas masivas en la zona militar número 21 y la desaparición forzada del niño Marco Antonio Molina Theissen, sin haber podido desvanecer el peligro para la obstaculización del proceso y la averiguación de la verdad y el peligro de fuga, el tribunal emitió su resolución.

Estamos ante una resolución que privilegia por sobre los derechos de las víctimas, al acusado, olvidando que el interés particular no debe primar ante los derechos colectivos de los pueblos, menos aún cuando los crímenes cometidos han sido tipificados como de trascendencia universal.

Dicha resolución:

Atenta contra el Derecho de las víctimas a la justicia, la averiguación de la verdad, y la ponderación de los agravios cometidos en contra de más de 1700 víctimas, niñas, niños, mujeres y hombres (registradas en 31 masacres, ejecuciones extrajudiciales, violaciones sexuales, desapariciones forzadas, torturas y otras graves violaciones a los derechos humanos) y pone en peligro la integridad física y mental de más de 100 testigos y testigas que valientemente lo llevaron a juicio durante todo el 2024 ante cualquier acto de represalias por parte del acusado, sus familiares y círculos cercanos.

Por lo tanto, exigimos al sistema de justicia guatemalteco, rectificar la resolución emitida por el Tribunal B, ponderando los derechos de las víctimas y subsanar así el agravio de que somos objeto.

Nuestra lucha ha sido siempre por la memoria, la verdad y la justicia para las víctimas del genocidio y por una Guatemala con justicia; esta resolución nos confirma la triste realidad de un sistema de justicia cooptado y corrompido a beneficio de los poderosos y nos obliga y compromete, a acudir a las instancias internacionales para hacer valer nuestros derechos como personas guatemaltecas víctimas de las mafias que mantienen capturada la justicia.

Guatemala. 15 de julio de 2026.



The team of volunteers in PBI Guatemala is currently composed of Nelly Horvath (Hungary), Ericka Stephania López Mota (Mexico), María Moreno Hurtado (Spain), María Josefina Díaz Zunino (Argentina), Joseph Dotu (France), Alfonso Ochoa de Zabalegui (Spain), Humberto Mendez (Mexico), Mauricio Lozano Massés (Mexico), Zoë Quinney Smith (Scotland) and Julia Ezcurdia Sánchez (Spain).

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**GUATEMALA PROJECT
PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

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