



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 275 - August 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.

Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán released after more than 15 months in pretrial detention

On August 5, Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán, the former president and treasurer of the 48 Cantones of Totonicapán, were released after spending 468 days in pretrial detention at the Mariscal Zavala prison. The Third Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Mynor Moto, replaced pretrial detention with house arrest and a fine of Q160,000 each. Pacheco and Chaclán must report periodically to the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and may not leave the country without judicial authorization. They are also prohibited from holding public office for the duration of the legal and criminal proceedings.¹

The two were arrested in April 2025 and are facing charges of terrorism, obstruction of criminal proceedings, and criminal conspiracy, because they led the 2023 protests, which sought to defend the election results and demand the resignation of corrupt officials such as Attorney General Consuelo Porras. The proceedings have been delayed due to numerous appeals and changes in judges; after 16 months, the case is still in the intermediate phase.²

They were released after the defense requested a review of the coercive measures. During the August 4 hearing, the judge also added the charge of criminal conspiracy and scheduled the next hearing for September 22. The Foundation Against Terrorism, which had asked to participate in the case as a joint plaintiff, did not appear at the hearing, and its request to join was denied.³

Pacheco and Chaclán's release from prison was met with a warm welcome from ancestral authorities, community leaders, and the people of Totonicapán. For the communities, their release marks an important moment, following more than a year of pretrial detention and legal proceedings in a case of criminalization that has been denounced by national and international organizations as targeting the indigenous leaders who headed the 106-day uprising in 2023.⁴

Indigenous authorities file an injunction against the TRECSA law

On August 9, 2026, indigenous and ancestral authorities representing different indigenous peoples of Guatemala filed an injunction with the Constitutional Court (CC) to halt the progress of Bill 6665, which aims to establish the Law of Urgent Infrastructure for the Transmission of Electrical Energy (TRECSA Law). They called for the third reading and approval of individual articles to be cancelled, believing that the proposal could violate collective, territorial, environmental, and communal property rights, as well as the right of indigenous peoples to prior consultation.⁵

Bill 6665 seeks to expedite the construction and expansion of electric power transmission infrastructure through a special system that streamlines administrative procedures and the establishment of easements,

¹ Pérez Mallorquín, C., [Luis Pacheco y Héctor Chaclán pagan una caución de Q160 mil cada uno y recuperan su libertad](#), Prensa Libre, 05 Aug 2026.

² García, J., [Del aislamiento carcelario al abrazo comunitario: cómo Luis Pacheco y Héctor Chaclán recuperaron la libertad](#), Plaza Pública, 10 Aug 2026.

³ Valdéz, A., [Luis Pacheco y Hector Chaclán regresan a casa tras 15 meses en prisión](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 05 Aug 2026.

⁴ Pérez Mallorquín, C., Op. Cit.

⁵ Antonio Ramón, S., [Autoridades indígenas accionan contra iniciativa de ley que ignora las consultas](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 10 Aug 26.

among other measures. The proposal has been championed as a way to accelerate strategic projects and strengthen the power grid, but indigenous and ancestral authorities warn that it could facilitate interference in indigenous territories and properties without adequately guaranteeing consultation with and participation by the affected communities. The injunction, filed by authorities from several Maya peoples, included a clear message regarding the communities' position: "Our land and territories are not for sale; they must be defended."⁶

Petén communities affected by the Law on Protected Areas call for dialogue with the government⁷

On August 26, 2026, 55 multicultural communities from Sierra del Lacandón and Laguna del Tigre, located in the municipalities of La Libertad and San Andrés, Petén, filed a request for high-level assistance and dialogue with the Private Secretariat of the Presidency. The communities, made up of more than 60,000 residents, argue that their presence in the region is the result of government policies on colonization, safety, and agrarian issues, as well as displacement caused by the Internal Armed Conflict. They also claim a historical connection to the Maya peoples who inhabited those territories and reject being characterized as outsiders or invaders. They note that the designation of protected areas through Decrees 4-89 and 5-90 was carried out without prior consultation and has served to justify criminalization, militarization, persecution, and evictions. Between 2000 and 2017, these actions affected more than 2,000 people and included operations in communities such as El Bergelito, La Colorada, Centro Uno, Nueva Esperanza, and Laguna Larga, which resulted in deaths, displacement, and inhumane living conditions.

The communities assert that, though they have made proposals for dialogue and comprehensive development—including state recognition, legally guaranteed tenure, and community-led conservation of natural resources—state institutions have not offered lasting solutions. Though the communities met with the Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH) and the Presidential Commission for Conflict Resolution (COPRECON) between 2025 and March 2026 in order to establish a framework agreement for a good faith dialogue process, these efforts came to a standstill.

At the same time, in June 2026, the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP) approved an update to the Laguna del Tigre Master Plan without consulting the communities. Meanwhile, threats of eviction, arrest warrants, the burning of homes, and the destruction of crops continue. These threats are compounded by the contamination of soil, rivers, and lagoons caused by oil spills and gas leaks caused by the closure of the oil company, PERENCO, and the abandonment of its infrastructure. In light of this situation, the communities are calling on the President to establish a high-level, binding technical roundtable, suspend implementation of the new Master Plan, urgently address the environmental and health crisis, prevent the looting of oil facilities, facilitate the return of the Laguna Larga community, and ensure good-faith consultation processes regarding measures that directly affect the populations in the territory.

Conclusions from the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights' Visit

From August 18 to 28, the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights conducted its first official visit to Guatemala to assess state obligations and corporate responsibilities regarding human rights. During the mission, experts Fernanda Hopenhaym and Lyra Jakulevičienė met with government officials, businesses, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, and communities in various departments across the country.

In their end of mission statement, the experts highlighted a number of challenges related to business activities, including the protection of indigenous peoples' rights, access to justice and reparations, labor rights, and the protection of human rights defenders. They also drew attention to the need to strengthen corporate human rights due diligence and to prevent negative impacts resulting from business projects.⁸

The visit took place against a backdrop of conflicts related to extractive and infrastructure projects.

⁶ Véliz, J., [Autoridades indígenas presentan amparo contra iniciativa de ley que llaman "Trecsa"](#), La Hora, 09 Aug 26.

⁷ Information provided by the Human Rights Law Firm (BDH), the communities' legal representative.

⁸ Antonio Ramón, S., [Expertos de ONU llegan a Guatemala para evaluar al país sobre tratados de empresas y derechos humanos](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 17 Aug 2026.

Organizations and communities have denounced operations that were launched without adequate consultation processes, while human rights defenders face risks and criminalization linked to their defense of territory and natural resources. Among its recommendations, the Working Group urged the State to adopt measures to end the criminalization of human rights defenders and to strengthen mechanisms for access to justice and reparations. The Working Group also emphasized the importance of preventing undue corporate influence on public institutions and of ensuring the effective participation of affected communities.⁹

The findings of the visit will be laid out in a report that will be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in 2027. Monitoring the implementation of these recommendations will be important in assessing the Guatemalan State's ability to guarantee the rights of communities and of those who defend their territory against the impacts of business activities.

Progress and setbacks in the Guatemalan justice system: The CC protects a former CICIG official from an arrest warrant, while no progress has been made in the case against Stuardo Campo

On August 26, the CC upheld a provisional protection that prevented an arrest warrant from being executed against Luis David Gaitán, former head of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The warrant had been issued by the Third Appeals Chamber in connection with the Odebrecht case, together with warrants against other former prosecutors, former CICIG members, and justice operators who investigated corruption cases involving political figures and who, in recent years, have faced criminal proceedings, arrest warrants, and, in some cases, exile. The CC's ruling upholds Gaitán's provisional protection while the constitutional proceedings continue; this does not constitute a ruling on his criminal liability or on the merits of the case, but it does represent a new judicial pronouncement regarding proceedings that have been identified as part of a broader context of criminalization of justice operators during the administration of Attorney General Consuelo Porras.¹⁰

However, Stuardo Campo, the only former justice operator still imprisoned, suffered another setback in one of the three ongoing cases against him. On August 27, the Tenth Criminal Court ordered that the intermediate phase hearing in the Zolic case against the former anti-corruption prosecutor be suspended – for the fourteenth time. His attorney, Lucía Xiloj, commented, “Unfortunately, it appears that this pattern will continue over the coming months. This shows that the other parties to the proceedings are engaging in malicious litigation by refusing to allow the process to move forward.” The other defense attorney, Vidal Ixcoy, pointed out that this appears to be malicious, since “the crimes of which he is accused (abuse of authority and denial of justice) carry sentences of two to two and a half years, and allow for alternative measures. However, Judge Víctor Cruz has not given him the opportunity to request those measures.” Stuardo Campo has been in pretrial detention since December 2023.¹¹

The Truth of Exile: Ethics, Criminalization and the Struggle for Justice in Guatemala (2014–2025)

The report, “The Truth of Exile: Ethics, Criminalisation [*sic*] and the Struggle for Justice in Guatemala (2014–2025)”, which was produced by Carlos Martín Beristain and presented on August 14, 2026, uses testimonies to document how the persecution and criminalization of justice operators, journalists, and human rights defenders have, in many cases, forced them to leave behind their lives in Guatemala. The report shows that exile is not a voluntary decision but rather the result of threats, legal proceedings, and other forms of persecution. It describes the personal, familial, professional, and economic consequences of exile, as well as the impact this phenomenon has had on justice and democracy in the country. It also highlights the need to make progress toward recognition, reparations, the restoration of rights, and the creation of conditions for a safe return.¹²

⁹ UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, [End of Mission Statement, Country Visit to Guatemala](#), United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 28 Aug 2026.

¹⁰ Valdéz, A., [CC avala fallo que frena orden de captura contra exmandatario de CICIG](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 26 Aug 2026 y Menchú, S., [El exilio judicial exige al presidente Arévalo “acciones concretas” para un regreso seguro a Guatemala](#), El País, 19 Aug 2026.

¹¹ Similox, H., [Abogados de Campo denuncian litigio malicioso por caso Zolic](#), *Diario de Centro America*, 31.08.2026.

¹² Beristain, C. M., [La verdad del exilio: Ética, criminalización y lucha por la justicia en Guatemala \(2014–2025\)](#), Casa Centroamérica, 14.08.26.

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS¹³

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.¹⁴

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

This month, we accompanied:

- The **family of Luz Leticia** during the final phase of the oral and public hearing in the criminal case against Juan Francisco Cifuentes Cano, who is accused of the forced disappearance of Luz Leticia Hernández Agustín. During the hearings, the MP, Lilian Vásquez (attorney for Luz Leticia's sisters), and Alejandro Apxuac (attorney representing the Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared of Guatemala - FAMDEGUA) presented their closing arguments for the prosecution. Juan Francisco Cifuentes Cano's defense, represented by José Axel Marín Quintanilla, also presented its closing arguments. A verdict is expected during the first week of September, nearly 44 years after Luz Leticia's forced disappearance. For more information on the legal proceedings and Luz Leticia's family's search for her, please read: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/40-years-searching-luz-leticia>



- The **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)** to a hearing in the CREOMPAZ case. During the hearing, the defense attempted to recuse the presiding judge on the grounds that she has an alleged personal interest. However, the court concluded that there was no evidence demonstrating a direct or indirect connection between this case and the judge; thus, she will remain in her position in the courtroom. No date has been set for the next hearing.

We also accompanied the law firm in submitting official requests for assistance and dialogue addressed to the Private Secretariat of the Presidency regarding the Laguna del Tigre and Sierra del Lacandón cases. More than 50 communities also submitted official requests to the Petén Departmental Government and held a demonstration to protest the lack of consultation regarding the extractive activities carried out by the oil company Perenco and the updated Master Plan, which was developed without their participation. The law firm, together with the communities, will also submit a request for a hearing with the President of the Republic to follow up on this case.



THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

This month, we accompanied the **Verapaz Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)** to a meeting with the Presidential Commission for Conflict Resolution (COPRECON), where UVOC presented several cases of evicted communities, such as Lajeb Kej and Nuevo Chintún in San Miguel Tucurú. The meeting aimed to resolve the ongoing legal uncertainty surrounding land titles. UVOC also presented the case of the Matucuy II community, in Purulhá, Baja Verapaz, where community members live in fear of eviction.

¹³ We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

¹⁴ 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, we accompanied:

- The **Peaceful Resistance of the Poqomam People of Chinautla** at a pastoral gathering that brought together different churches from the region, as well as representatives of indigenous communities from Mexico and El Salvador. This gathering sought to express solidarity with the struggle to defend the right to a healthy environment and to ensure respect for their ancestral lands.



We also accompanied the Resistance to roundtable discussions with the municipality of Chinautla and the departmental administration of Guatemala to track progress on the cleanup of the Las Vacas River and address illegal logging in the region. Representatives from the Chinautla mayor's office, as well as officials from the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH) and the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), were present. They reported on progress in mapping the river's course, an effort promoted by the Resistance to gauge levels of pollution.

- The **Maya Ch'orti' Indigenous Council of Olopa**, Chiquimula, to a hearing between Council members and representatives of the Los Manantiales quarry. The hearing aimed to clear up false accusations that the mine had paid Council members to allow it to operate in the area. What really happened was that the Council members' signatures were forged and used to obtain the supposed consent of the ancestral authorities. The mine's representatives did not attend the hearing. In response, the Council issued a statement defending its struggle against the mines, rejecting the resumption of any mining operations, and refuting any allegations of bribery.
- The **National Network for the Defense of Food Sovereignty (REDSAG)** to a meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA). REDSAG resumed roundtable discussions with the government following disagreements over Government Agreement 53/2026. This decree, especially Chapter X, which streamlines bureaucratic processes for applying for permits to market, harvest, and experiment with genetically modified seeds, was the main point of discussion at the meeting. Despite disagreements over the decree, government officials, with the MAGA Deputy Minister present, stated their intention to continue the dialogue between the government and REDSAG.
- The **Indigenous Community of San Francisco Quezaltepeque** to a Maya ceremony in the community of San Francisco. During the ceremony, community members discussed the importance of protecting the environment and the role that Indigenous communities play in that struggle.

We also visited the communal lands where one of the people we accompany works. This person is one of the community's ancestral leaders and, because of his work defending land and territory, has been the victim of intimidation.



This month, we accompanied the **Maya Ch'orti' Council of Ancestral Indigenous Communities of San Juan Ermita**, located in the department of Chiquimula. The Council represents seven communities – Minas Abajo, Tasharjá Centro, Tasharjá Arriba, El Magueyal, San Antonio Lajas, Vivienda Nueva, and Los Planes – although its work extends throughout the entire municipality. The Council's work focuses on three key areas: regaining title to their ancestral lands, gaining recognition as a community and an indigenous authority by state institutions, and protecting against illegal logging in the region. After years of hard work and perseverance, they were recognized as an indigenous community by the Chiquimula Departmental Government on May 6, 2026.



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 August 14, we attended the **First National Consultation on Sexual Diversity and Indigenous Peoples of Guatemala** in Quetzaltenango. This event represented a historic milestone, as it was the first time that the struggles and violence faced by LGBTQIA+ groups were made visible to Guatemalan ancestral authorities. The consultation was held at the Quetzaltenango Intercultural Center, a symbolic site that has been given new meaning, as it served as a military outpost during the internal armed conflict and was the site of crimes against humanity, such as torture and forced disappearances. Representatives from various linguistic communities in Guatemala—K'iche', Q'eqchi', Kaqchikel, Mam, Q'anjob'al, Poqomchi, and Ixil—attended the consultation. There was a call to "share the burden" and build community to counter the growing violence in the country. Participants also emphasized how important it is to understand that they cannot make their experiences visible or reaffirm their dignity without first embracing their Maya identity.

On August 18, we were going to observe the intermediate phase **hearing in the "USAC Takeover: Political Looting"** ("Toma USAC: Botín Político") case, in which human rights attorney **Ramón Cadena** is being prosecuted on charges of aggravated trespass and destruction of cultural property, together with students Pedro Ros and Christopher Morales. However, the hearing was postponed for the third time due to Judge Víctor Cruz's absence. It was rescheduled for March 8, 2027.



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 the diplomatic corps and international organizations, this month we met with:

- Jennifer Echeverría, Cooperation and Human Rights Programs Officer at the **Delegation of the European Union in Guatemala**.
- Alejandro Gallardo, Head of the Political Section at the **Embassy of the United Kingdom in Guatemala**.
- Friederike Hellner, **German Ambassador to Guatemala**.

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

- Mariluz Velazquez, assistant head of the PDH in Esquipulas.
- José Armando Morales Monzón, Political Advisor to the **Departmental Government, Guatemala**.

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

On August 20 and 21, we held a **healing gathering** for women defenders of the territory of their bodies and lands in Quiché. The event was facilitated by TZK'AT, the Network of Ancestral Healers of Territorial Community Feminism from Iximulew. Twenty-three women rights defenders, representing five organizations from the region and other parts of the country, participated.



Our **Popular Bulletin No. 18** is now available. In the bulletin, we feature Sites of Memory, which are the voice and symbol of those who suffered state violence during the Internal Armed Conflict because of their struggle for a more just Guatemala, with education, health care, decent work, and land for Guatemalan people. This bulletin reminds of who these brave individuals were and the work they carried out. It also highlights the state's obligation to ensure that such atrocities against those who defend life are never repeated. You can read it at the following link: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/es/multimedia/boletin-popular>

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.

This month, PBI Guatemala's European Representative met with Sandra Hochstoeger, a representative on the Working Group on Latin America (COLAC) and the Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM) of the **Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union**.

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.



LAS AUTORIDADES INDÍGENAS DE LOS PUEBLOS MAYAS Y XINKA, AL PUEBLO DE GUATEMALA, COMUNICAMOS:

DEFENDER LOS DERECHOS Y LA DEMOCRACIA NO ES UN CRIMEN...

Las autoridades indígenas ancestrales de nuestros pueblos expresamos nuestra profunda satisfacción por la medida sustitutiva otorgada a las ex autoridades indígenas **Luis Arnoldo Pacheco Gutiérrez** y **Héctor Samuel Chaclán**, quienes han sido víctimas de una injusta prisión preventiva impulsada por el sistema de justicia penal del Estado de Guatemala, encabezado por el Ministerio Público de María Consuelo Porras Argueta como cara visible del pacto de corruptos y golpistas; que instrumentalizó la justicia penal para amedrentar, reprimir y criminalizar la libertad de expresión, el libre pensamiento y la defensa de la voluntad popular manifestada en las urnas en 2023.

Reiteramos que **defender los derechos de los pueblos indígenas y del pueblo de Guatemala no es un crimen**. No obstante, diversas autoridades indígenas han pagado con su libertad y sus proyectos de vida la frágil democracia y estabilidad que hoy respira el país.

Anhelamos que este sea solo el primer paso para que, en un futuro cercano, los procesos penales espurios e inventados por la intolerancia del pacto de corruptos sean sobrepasados definitivamente por carecer de sustento legal, fáctico y probatorio.

Enviamos nuestro saludo fraterno y solidaridad al heroico pueblo k'iche' de los 48 Cantones de Totonicapán, a sus autoridades ancestrales y a las familias Pacheco, Chaclán, Toc y Puac.

Como autoridades indígenas ancestrales, jamás claudicaremos frente al ejemplo de lucha heredado de nuestros antepasados, quienes, aun en medio de la adversidad y la represión, no cedieron en la defensa de nuestra tierra, territorio, principios, valores y dignidad.

Que este avance contra la criminalización de autoridades indígenas sea la llama que fortalezca a nuestros pueblos y comunidades y a los equipos de profesionales que acompañan incansablemente estos logros.

Desde nuestros territorios, 5 de agosto de 2026, a 206 años de la captura de Francisco Atanasio Tzul y Lucas Akiral.

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 (United Kingdom) and Julia Ezcurdia Sánchez (Spain).

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**GUATEMALA PROJECT
PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

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