

8-1-1990

Guatemala: 800 Assassinations & Over 200 Disappeared In 1990

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Guatemala: 800 Assassinations & Over 200 Disappeared In 1990." (1990). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/4225>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Guatemala: 800 Assassinations & Over 200 Disappeared In 1990

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, August 1, 1990

According to human rights organizations presenting testimony at a meeting in San Jose of the Permanent Popular Tribunal (TPP), 800 assassinations and over 200 persons were "disappeared" in the first six months of 1990. Blanca Rosa Quiros, a member of the executive board of the Mutual Support Group for Relatives of the Disappeared (GAM), told AFP that disappearances in Guatemala have been on the upswing for several months. The justice system in Guatemala, she said, is "inoperable," and thus, persons responsible for crimes such as abduction/disappearance, act with impunity. Quiros emphasized that political violence continues to increase. During a single day in June, she said, 25 cadavers were found in urban areas mainly in the environs of the capital city. Meanwhile, kidnappings and assassinations have been stepped up in rural areas as well, particularly in conflict zones of El Quiche and San Marcos departments. Spokesperson for the Campesino Unity Committee (CUC), Rigoberta Menchu, said that in Guatemala the disappearance of between 10 and 20 persons per month has been documented, adding that many of these disappearances end in death. She said that identification of corpses found on roadsides and in culverts is often impossible, because victims had suffered torture and mutilation. Menchu, a leader of Guatemala's indigenous community, has been exiled in Mexico since 1981. A statement by the National Electricity Institute Workers' Union (STINEG) asserted that repression against labor unions continues. STINEG submitted to the tribunal the case of Jose Leon Segura de la Cruz, victim of "extrajudicial execution" in 1989. The case has not yet been investigated by legal authorities. A Catholic priest, who worked with "communities in resistance" in northern El Quiche department for two years, spoke with AFP on condition of anonymity. He said that since 1983 about 25,000 indigenous persons residing in Ixcam and Ixil have been hiding and fleeing from constant harassment and attacks by soldiers. The priest said these people are unarmed and cannot be described as belligerents. However, he said, since they have been under constant attack by the army, guerrillas in the area protect them. Next, the priest told AFP that soldiers guilty of mass murder of civilians between 1981 and 1983 and thereafter are now high-level officers, including Defense Minister Gen. Leonel Bolanos. Bolanos directed the military's "scorched earth" operations in 1981-83. He was succeeded by Gen. Matta Galvez, current head of the joint chiefs of staff, and continued the practice. The Tribunal is an independent organization of global reach created in 1976 to judge crimes "against humanity." On the previous weekend, Guatemala and Honduras were charged with "repeated crimes and systematic attacks against the human rights of the civilian population." The governments of both countries were found guilty by three Tribunal judges who convened in San Jose for three days hearing testimony and accusations by Guatemalans and Hondurans. The Tribunal has no power to enforce its rulings, but rather exercises what it calls "moral weight." The Tribunal's secretary general, Italian Giani Tognoni, told AFP that in the case of Guatemala, human rights violations "are part of a whole such as the greater crime of ethnocide or even genocide against the indigenous population." Sixty percent of nearly nine million Guatemalans are members of indigenous communities. (Basic data from AFP, 07/24/90)

-- End --