

February 2008

GSN News

Guatemala's Constitutional Court denied in December, the extradition to Spain of former military officers accused of genocide during Guatemala's civil war. The Court argued that Spain had no jurisdiction over crimes committed in Guatemala. Spain's National Court and Judge Santiago Pedraz disagreed and in January accused the Guatemalan judiciary of refusing to cooperate with his investigation. Judge Pedraz has appealed to anyone in the world having information about the Maya genocide to contribute to his investigation. Check with NISGUA for possible solidarity actions around this issue on their website at <http://www.nisgua.org>. While on the website, you might also want to read their analysis of the recent presidential elections and what to (or not to) expect from President Alvaro Colom.

Campaign Justice for Pepe – Justice for Guatemala: The family of Pepe Méndez ended their hunger strike—after only two days and two nights—after Vice President Dr. Rafael Espada committed to meeting with the family to discuss the investigation into Pepe's murder as well as the overall state of impunity in Guatemala. Updates are posted on the Center for Gender and Refugees website at http://cgrs.uchastings.edu/campaigns/pepe/JusticeForPepe_page.html

New Resources

Documentary: A new documentary, *Precarious Peace: God and Guatemala* produced by Shirley and Rudy Nelson is available from Vision Video (www.visionvideo.com; 800-523-0226) for \$24.95 plus shipping, including a study guide. According to a review by Rick Ufford-Chase in *The Other Side* (March/April 2004), "*Precarious Peace* pulls no punches and presents no easy answers as it looks respectfully at the role of the church in Guatemala during the thirty-six year civil war and since the signing

GSN coordinator and editor of *GSN News* is Susan Berger. Please send items for the *News* to her at Fordham University, Political Science Department, 113 West 60th Street, New York, NY 10023, 212-636-6362, or berger@fordham.edu. R. McKenna Brown is the GSN treasurer and maintains the mailing list. Send dues and changes of address to him at Guatemala Scholars Network, International Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, P.O. Box 843080, Richmond, VA 23284-3080, 804-827-1671, mbrown@saturn.vcu.edu. Ted Fischer, with the help of the Vanderbilt Anthropology Department, manages the GSN website at: <http://www.Vanderbilt.edu/AnS/Anthro/GSN/>.

the peace accords in December, 1996. Through a series of diverse and vividly told stories, the film lays out the challenges confronting the church and the tensions between Catholicism, *Evangelico* Protestantism Latin American style, and the deep-rooted spirituality of the indigenous cultures." Shirley and Rudy Nelson have also written an article on the making of the documentary. The article is "Making Peace" *Image* 44(2004), 97-109.

Books and Articles:

Susanne Jonas has been working with the Holocaust Museum in Washington since a conference in January 2004 to ensure Guatemala is included in discussions of genocide. She has recently been asked to write a chapter on Guatemala for an edited book/textbook that is very widely used, called "Century of Genocide." Her introductory essay will be accompanied by some of the first-person testimonies about the 1981-83 massacres from the January, 1983 Permanent People's Tribunal on Guatemala in Madrid. The book is: *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts* (3rd edition), co-edited by Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons, to be published by Routledge by late Spring. The previous editions of the book did not include Guatemala.

Walter Randolph Adams and John Palmer Hawkins have written a new book, *Health Care in Maya Guatemala: Confronting Pluralism in a Developing Country*, which is published by the University of Oklahoma Press, 2007.

Frank Afflitto and Paul Jesilow have a new book, *The Quiet Revolutionaries: Seeking Justice in Guatemala*, published by the University of Texas Press, 2007.

Manuela Camus has edited the recently published, *Comunidades en movimiento. La migración internacional en el norte de Huehuetenango*. Guatemala: Instituto Centroamericano de Desarrollo y Estudios Sociales y Centro de Documentación de la Frontera Occidental de Guatemala, 2007. ISBN: 978-99922-860-5-0. The book is available from F&G Editores / F&G Libros de Guatemala, www.fygeditores.com, (502) 2433 2361 / (502) 5406 0909, Fax: (502) 2433 2361. Check out their website for other books published by F&G Editores.

Martha Few's article "That Monster of Nature": Gender, Sexuality, and the Medicalization of a "Hermaphrodite" in Late Colonial Guatemala, is in *Ethnohistory* (2007) 54: 159-176.

Heather Tosteson has a new novel, *Visible Signs* published by Wising Up Press. To order go to <http://www.universaltable.org/library.html>, (404) 276-6046. "Set in Antigua, Guatemala, *Visible Signs* tells the story of Mikela, a fierce ten year old indigenous girl determined to save her pregnant severely traumatized twelve year old sister, Natividad, and the child she carries. To save her sister, Mikela draws together an odd, engaging assortment of

American women living in Antigua. What will happen to Mikela, Natividad and the baby becomes the central question of the novel."

Internet Sources:

The Guatemala Solidarity Network in the UK maintains a website with current information, analysis, urgent actions, and You Tube shorts on Guatemala.
<http://gsn.civiblog.org/blog/SolidarityinAction>

BECOME A HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVER IN GUATEMALA!

The Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) has several openings for qualified volunteers to act as human rights observers as part of the Guatemala Accompaniment Project (G.A.P.). NISGUA is one of many organizations around the world that employs accompaniment as a vital tool in the global struggle for the respect of human rights. In the Guatemalan context, accompaniment creates a non-violent response to the threats, harassment, and violence faced by survivors of Guatemala's 36-year-long civil war and grassroots organizations working for justice and human rights. To this end, NISGUA's Guatemala Accompaniment Project (G.A.P.) places long-term volunteers side-by-side with people in rural communities and with organizations in an effort to deter human rights violations. The dissuasive physical presence of these volunteers, known as accompaniers, provides a measure of security and creates space for Guatemalan communities and groups to organize in defense of their rights. Accompaniers also monitor and report on the human rights situation and alert the international community to abuses. For more information, contact: NISGUA/G.A.P., 1830 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 265- 8713, gap@nisgua.org.

Study Abroad in Antigua, Guatemala at CIRMA

The Center for Mesoamerican Research (CIRMA) and the University of Arizona invite you to study abroad in Antigua, Guatemala. Deepen your understanding of the social, historical and political dynamics of Central America and learn Spanish while living in an historic town surrounded by volcanoes.

At CIRMA, you can study the history of Central American revolutions, Mayan culture, human rights, anthropology, archeology, literature and politics, as well as Spanish and/or a Mayan language. Personalized classes are taught by knowledgeable Central American scholars and promote an understanding of the region from the "ground up."

Students receive a University of Arizona transcript. Most classes receive three undergraduate credits. Classes may be taken for honors credit, and

some classes can be taken for graduate credit.

For more information and a complete schedule of classes and registration information, to see photos of CIRMA and Antigua and to read what other students have to say about living and studying in Guatemala: go to: <http://www.cirma.org.gt> and click on "study abroad".

Relocation of the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala

NISGUA has moved. Their new contact information is: 436 14th Street, Suite 409 Oakland, CA 94612 phone: 510-238-8400 fax/phone: 510-238-8444; www.nisgua.org

GSN Membership Business

We are soliciting dues for the Guatemala Scholars Network and again ask for any additional contribution you may wish to make for the sponsorship of Guatemalans on our AAA and LASA panels. We need your support more than ever so that we can continue to bring panelists from Guatemala to participate in our discussions at this critical time. The Network has a two-tiered dues system. **Employed members pay \$35.00**, and those not currently working (**students, retired, between jobs, etc.**) **pay \$20.00**. This money covers the production and mailing expenses for our newsletter and the basic expenses of running the Network. Dues and contributions to the Network are not tax deductible except as professional expenses. Please complete the attached Membership Form and send with payment to R. McKenna Brown, Guatemala Scholars Network, International Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, P.O. Box 843080, Richmond, VA 23284-3080. If you recently responded to an email call for dues, thanks and please ignore this solicitation.

Please signup to be on the GSN listserv by sending an email to Ted Fischer at edward.f.fischer@vanderbilt.edu. When we get urgent action notices, information about job opportunities in Guatemala related activism, and requests for help from GSN members, we send out notices to the listserv. Not many notices go out to the listserv so you do not have to worry about being bombarded with emails.

Remember to send Susan Berger all notices, articles, information about your work, etc. you would like published in the News. You can email them to her at berger@fordham.edu.

GSN gets numerous requests for people to write expert affidavits for

Guatemalans applying for asylum. If you have specific expertise on ethnic, gender, or regional issues and would be willing to have the attorney of an asylum seeker contact you, would you please send your email and/or phone number to Susan. Thanks.

LASA 2009

The deadline for proposals for LASA2009 is March 28, 2008. At the GSN meeting at LASA2007 we discussed trying to organize a GSN panel. Possible topics: Justice and the Politics of Multiculturalism in Guatemala; Immigration and Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in Guatemala and the United States; something on the new government; labor rights and the struggle over resources, etc. Let Susan Berger know if you have ideas or are interested in participating.

United Nations and Guatemala

United Nations Department of Political Affairs

United Nations and Guatemala to launch international probe against impunity and organized crime

New York, 10 January 2008. The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala -- an innovative effort to help Guatemala investigate and dismantle violent criminal organizations believed responsible for widespread crime and the paralysis in the country's justice system -- will be formally launched tomorrow in Guatemala City by the Government of Guatemala and the United Nations.

The UN's top political official, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe, is traveling to Guatemala to participate in Friday's ceremony, along with Carlos Castresana Fernández, the commissioner designated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to head the independent investigative body, known by its Spanish initials CICIG.

The establishment of CICIG culminates years of efforts to create an effective means of international assistance to Guatemala in its fight against "illegal security forces and clandestine security organizations" -- criminal groups believed to have infiltrated state institutions including the justice system, ensuring impunity for their actions and undermining democratic gains in Guatemala since the end of the country's armed conflict in the 1990s. The proposal was initially formulated in response to threats and violence against Guatemalan human rights workers that were attributed to these same clandestine groups. It represents an important, new initiative by the United Nations, together with a Member State, to strengthen the rule of law in a post-conflict country.

The Commission's mandate permits it to carry out independent investigations and to act as a complementary prosecutor, helping Guatemalan authorities to bring representative cases to trial in national courts. The Commission differs in this regard from international tribunals in that CICIG, by working through the local court system and in close partnership with Guatemala's Public Prosecutor's Office and its National Civilian Police, aims not only to achieve convictions, but also to strengthen the national criminal justice system and demonstrate that it can be made to work. CICIG will also recommend public policies to help fight the criminal groups who are the subject of its investigations.

The Guatemala City-based Commission currently operates with a small core staff which is expected to grow by mid-2008 to a full professional staff level of approximately 100, both international and Guatemalans – in their majority, criminal justice experts with experience in handling organized crime cases. CICIG has a two-year mandate that can be renewed at the request of the Government.

The Commission is funded entirely by international donations. It has currently received contributions or pledges totaling more than \$21 million, from countries including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as from the World Bank and the Soros Foundation.

CICIG's Commissioner, Carlos Castresana Fernández, has been since 2005 a Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Spain, and has extensive experience in areas related to the mandate of the Commission. From 1995 to 2005, he worked in the Special Prosecutor's Office against Corruption, investigating and prosecuting cases of serious corruption, white collar and economic crimes before the National Court and other Spanish courts. From 1993 to 1995 he was assigned to the Special Prosecutor's Office against Drug Trafficking, where he handled cases of criminal organizations charged with international drug smuggling and money laundering.

CICIG was established under an agreement signed between the United Nations and the Government of Guatemala in December 2006, ratified in August 2007 by the Guatemalan Congress, and which entered into force on 4 September 2007. The Commission operates with assistance from the United Nations Department of Political Affairs in New York and support in Guatemala from the United Nations Development Programme. On behalf of the United Nations, the Department of Political Affairs led the discussions with the Government of Guatemala that culminated in the establishment of CICIG.

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