

A close-up, profile view of a woman with dark hair, looking towards the left. She is wearing a vibrant, multi-colored woven headband and a matching shawl with intricate geometric patterns in shades of green, red, blue, and yellow. The background is blurred, showing other people in similar traditional attire.

GUATEMALA:

REDRESS & PUNISH SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING CONFLICT

Women, mainly indigenous, were raped and sexually exploited by the Guatemalan military forces during the conflict between 1960 and 1986.

Recent research proves that sexual violence was planned by the highest military and political commands, particularly during the dictatorship of Rios Montt (1982 – 1983), to capture and sexually enslave women from communities for the leisure of troops. The bodies of women were utilized to dominate the indigenous communities and to ensure that land was expropriated from them.

Support the Union of Guatemalan Women and the Central America Women's Network to have the voices of women heard: sexual violence in the Guatemalan conflict must be acknowledged and redressed.

The Guatemalan State tried to make people forget about these crimes after signing the peace treaties in 1996.

They wanted to turn the page and make a fresh start.

But that is not possible.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Between 1960 and 1996 Guatemala was engaged in a civil war. Hundreds of women were raped; some because of indiscriminate actions; many others fell victims of their political and social engagement.

Today we know that sexual violence was a strategy of the Guatemalan army at the time, as at least four levels of command were involved in its planning, including dictator Ríos Montt.

The most violent stage of the 36-year conflict was between 1978 and 1983, under the dictatorships of Generals Lucas García and Ríos Montt (1982-1983), when 81% of the violations took place, 48% occurring during 1982.

THE SEPUR ZARCO CASE

A military detachment was placed in the Sepur Zarco community located in the Polochic area, where, since the colonial times, there was demand for land by indigenous communities. The

guerrilla forces were not very active. Instead the strong military presence there illustrates the alliance between the army and the economic elites and land-owners to dominate the communities and to ensure that land was expropriated from them.

For six years (1982-1986), the function the Sepur Zarco military detachment was to provide leisure and rest to the troops. Captured women from the indigenous communities, mainly widows after their husbands were forcibly disappeared, were forced to serve the troops, washing the soldiers' clothes, cooking and feeding them, and serving them sexually.

The fact that the women were organized in shifts in military detachments, provided with contraception to avoid getting pregnant as a result of the rapes and that sexual violence was also used as torture to obtain information, proves that the sexual violence was planned and administratively organized by the army. Women's bodies were used to send messages of terror to whole communities. The planning proves that these events did not take place in isolation.

WHAT CAN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DO?

The trial of Ríos Montt for genocide and crimes against humanity in early 2014 was a great step to acknowledge that the sexual violence during the armed conflict constitutes genocide and to redress victims.

Ríos Montt abrupt acquittal after he was sentenced to 80 years in prison and the dismissal of the judge who led the trial only prove the lack of will to redress and prevent sexual violence in conflict by the current Guatemalan State.

DEMAND that the Guatemalan State respects and guarantees the trial of Ríos Montt according to the law and to the various human rights protocols and conventions that Guatemala has signed up to.

SUPPORT the Union of Guatemalan Women (UNAMG) campaign. Contact the Central America Women's Network in London to help: campaigns@cawn.org

