



For Immediate Release
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Defendants in genocide case arrested in Guatemala

EXTRADITION TO SPAIN IMMINENT

Guatemala City, Guatemala, November 7, 2006: In an unprecedented move, Guatemalan authorities arrested earlier today at least two of the eight named defendants in the Guatemalan Genocide Case that is pending before the Spanish National Court (SNC). Guatemalan Judge Morelia Rios, President of Criminal Sentencing Court No. 5, courageously authorized the arrests in response to the international arrest warrants issued earlier this year by Spanish judge Santiago Pedraz. Attorneys with the San Francisco-based Center for Justice & Accountability (CJA) represent victims of the Guatemalan genocide and applaud the arrests.

Former Minister of Defense Ángel Aníbal Guevara Rodríguez and former Director of the National Police Colonel German Chupina Barahona were taken into police custody earlier today. Also, police have secured the area around the home of former president General Oscar Humberto Mejías Victores, but he appears to be on the run. They each will face extradition to Spain. Judge Rios has authorized the arrests of the other individuals named in the Spanish arrest orders with the exception of former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt.

CJA International Attorney Almudena Bernabeu explains, “We are extremely encouraged by the news of these historical arrests made today in Guatemala. These men have blood on their hands from the tens of thousands who died in the Guatemalan genocide of the 1980s. We hope that Rios Montt will also be brought into custody as soon as possible and we are inquiring as to why his arrest has not yet been ordered.”

The other defendants named on the arrest warrants are former President Romeo Lucas García, former Minister of Interior Donaldo Álvarez Ruiz, former Police Commander Pedro García Arredondo, and former Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff Benedicto Lucas García.

Judge Pedraz issued the international arrest warrants after he traveled, along with CJA attorney Bernabeu and public prosecutor Jesús Alonso, to Guatemala City to take testimony from the defendants. Upon their arrival, lawyers for the defendants filed several appeals forcing the Guatemalan Constitutional Court to indefinitely suspend the proceedings. Upon returning to Spain, on July 7, 2006, Judge Pedraz issued arrest

warrants for the eight defendants named in the case. Judge Pedraz said his decision was based on the “obstructionist attitude of the defendants and because there is sufficient evidence that the crimes of genocide, terrorism, torture, murder and illegal detention were committed by the defendants.”

CJA played a key role in presenting evidence to Judge Pedraz and pushing for the arrest warrants. CJA also assisted in directing the arrest warrants to proceed under the appropriate diplomatic channels prescribed by Guatemalan law.

The case began in 1999 when Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum and other victims filed a criminal complaint in the SNC against the senior Guatemalan government officials charging them with terrorism, genocide and systematic torture. CJA joined the complaint in 2004 on behalf of two victims. The case, known as the Guatemalan Genocide Case, is modeled on the Pinochet case which was also brought before the SNC.

CJA is a San Francisco-based non-profit organization which works to deter torture and other severe human rights abuses through impact litigation, education and outreach. CJA is the only U.S. based human rights legal organization solely devoted to seeking justice and accountability on behalf of torture survivors against their perpetrators in the courts.