

July 19, 2010

Dear Friends,

The war crimes cases are still pressing forwards, but things remain extremely tense right now in Guatemala. There have been an unusually large number of attacks and killings throughout the country. A woman deeply involved in the anti-mining campaign was recently shot through the head. Another woman who was once involved in the Dos Erres massacre case as a court official has also been shot point blank in her home. Nothing was stolen in either killing. My lawyer, Edgar Perez, came home with his family two weeks ago to find that his house had been broken into. Some money was stolen from a special closet, but the house was also ransacked. Someone also tampered with his car. The fiscals have been getting threats as well, and I remain under threat of arrest. To summarize, Conrado Reyes is gone from the Prosecutor's Office, and the de facto coup was averted by Castresana's amazing resignation speech. But the situation remains very tense and very very violent in all regions.

The human rights community continues to amaze me. Aura Elena and the women at FAMDEGUA are pressing the Dos Erres massacre case, and have accepted the Panzos massacre case as well, despite the obvious risks. Nineth is doing great work as a Congresswoman and is also receiving very serious death threats. Several local rights defenders as well as some officials are facing rather preposterous criminal complaints. As in my own case, these were filed just as Conrado Reyes was appointed. With 20-20 hindsight it seems pretty clear to me that we were really going to get hauled off to jail as a warning to the others. The Fiscal's office is working to get these dismissed...we will see what happens. None of us plan to leave.

Meanwhile, in Everardo's case I keep finding more important materials and connections. Right now we are dealing with the half dozen amparos from the defense that are paralyzing the proceedings. These are all based on the claim that the case should not have been reopened, (despite the Inter-American Court ruling) and that I should not be allowed to participate or present my evidence because I am not the wife (despite the Inter-American court ruling). The only way they can win this is for the Corte de Constitucionalidad to rule that the Supreme Court had no right to apply international human rights law. Of course, no one is going to want to do that, so it will be interesting to see what happens.

Two days ago the human rights community put together a really interesting forum in Zona 10. The subject was Psy-Ops and Defamation Campaigns as military strategies to maintain the official impunity. Everyone is pretty much sick of the campaña negras down here. It has been happening since Arbenz right through to the recent case of Castresana of the CICIG. Some of the examples the panel discussed were the Gerardi case, the public smear campaigns of the young women being slaughtered in the femicide, the case of Dianna Ortiz, and of course, yours truly. The strategy is obviously to discredit and punish the victim, and divert all public dialogue away from the real issues, such as genocide and torture.

We have all decided to work together to recognize the issue and deal with it as a serious human rights violation in its own right. In fact the Inter-American Court said as much a few years ago in Everardo's case.

Thanks once again to everyone for the calls and letters of support. They made a real difference, and really raised the morale in a number of offices.

Abrazos, Jennifer