



Association for Justice and Reconciliation

Statement to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 12th Session
New York, NY, May 22, 2013

Brothers and sisters of the indigenous peoples of the world and members of the Permanent Forum:

We, as indigenous peoples, stand on the threshold of a new era of shared struggle. In this spirit, we come to ask that the Assembly recommends to the state of Guatemala that justice for our people prevails and that a strong foundation be built to construct new, more just, and harmonious relations for all.

On May 10, Guatemala set an example for the world by being the first country to emit a sentence for genocide against a former head of State in a national court. We, the plaintiffs and members of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation, have seen this process as an opportunity to recuperate the truth that has been denied to our families and to Guatemalan society in general. It is an opportunity to confront the past and address the root causes of the discrimination we suffer as indigenous peoples in Guatemala today.

However, the sentence has just been annulled by the highest court in the country. This takes place in a context where business elites and groups linked to the military who carried out the extermination rejected the sentence and sought to create terror by encouraging social polarization and calling for society to deny the truth. What happened this week in Guatemala is not coincidence, but part of a political structure that denies us justice. We have spent 12 years preparing evidence and arguments, dealing with all manner of obstacles. The moment we begin to move forward, the legitimacy of judicial processes is questioned and we hear officials threatening lawyers and judges. Despite all of this, our cause does not end here.

Today, more than ever, it is imperative we continue to demand justice and face the past to ensure acts of genocide never again take place in Guatemala and the Guatemalan state respects, protects and promotes the rights of indigenous peoples. As long as this does not happen, the state will continue to deny our rights and facilitate the dispossession of the lands and natural resources that are fundamental to the material and spiritual life of indigenous peoples. Brothers and sisters: we must stop the continuation of genocide in Guatemala.

Not in Guatemala nor any other place in the world: Genocide, never again