



LAWYERS WITHOUT BORDERS  
AVOCATS SANS FRONTIERES  
ABOGADOS SIN FRONTERAS  
Canada

**NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE CIRCULATION**

Four ex-military members are convicted of crimes against humanity in Guatemala;  
One of their co-accused is detained in Canada

**Lawyers Without Borders Canada Commends the Decision  
in the Dos Erres Massacre Trial and Urges Canada to  
Consider it in the Case of Jorge Vinicio Sosa Orantes**

Guatemala City, August 3, 2011 – Lawyers Without Borders Canada (LWBC) commends the decision rendered yesterday in Guatemala City by the First Instance Criminal Court in the case of the massacre of the community of Las Dos Erres.

The four ex-military members who stood trial were condemned to 30 years of imprisonment for each of the 201 persons whose murder was proven and to 30 years for crimes against humanity. The tribunal accepted the overwhelming evidence presented by the prosecution and the victims' lawyers, ruling that between December 6 and 8, 1982, three of the four individuals convicted tortured, raped and massacred the population of Las Dos Erres, pregnant women and newborn babies being among the victims. The fourth individual convicted was found to have collaborated in setting up the conditions for the massacre to take place and appropriated the victims' properties thereafter.

*"It is a historic verdict, a great day for justice in Guatemala and internationally, said Pascal Paradis, LWBC's Executive Director, present for the end of the trial and the judgment. The victims' families at last obtained justice after 29 years of impunity and almost 20 years of legal battles. We salute the work of the three judges of the Court. We congratulate the victims' families, their representatives from civil society and their lawyers, whose work was supported by LWBC in this case."*

This decision opens the way for justice to be rendered in other emblematic cases of human rights violations committed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict. *"We will continue to reinforce the victims' lawyers in this endeavour"*, added Mr. Paradis.

Three of the four persons convicted yesterday were part of an elite unit of the Guatemalan military comprised of 17 members, including Mr. Jorge Vinicio Sosa Orantes. The latter was arrested in Lethbridge, Alberta on January 18, 2011. Mr. Sosa Orantes, who holds Guatemalan, Canadian and US citizenships, is still being held in Alberta and faces extradition to the USA on immigration fraud charges.

More importantly for LWBC is the fact the Mr. Sosa Orantes is officially accused in Guatemala of having participated in the Dos Erres massacre. The testimonies and documentary evidence accepted yesterday by the tribunal identify him by name as one of the other presumed perpetrators of said massacre.

*“The Canadian government recently decided to act with respect to persons who allegedly committed crimes against humanity or war crimes and who are in Canada. It therefore ought to take yesterday’s decision into account in the case of Mr. Sosa Orantes. Mr. Sosa Orantes must not be extradited unless Canada obtains guaranties to the effect that he will face justice and will be able to defend himself in relation to his alleged participation in the Dos Erres massacre. If not, Canada will have to investigate and eventually try the case under its Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act. It is what the victims desire, it is what justice and the fight against impunity demand”,* concluded Mr. Paradis.

###

**About Lawyers Without Borders Canada:** LWBC ([www.asfcanada.ca](http://www.asfcanada.ca)) is a non-governmental organization registered as a charity in Canada. Its core mission is to help defend the human rights of the most vulnerable persons and groups by reinforcing access to justice and legal representation. LWBC’s main international cooperation programs are presently undertaken in Haiti, Colombia and Guatemala. In the latter country, LWBC runs, thanks to the support of the Canadian government, an international cooperation program aiming at reinforcing victims’ legal representation for the strategic litigation of human rights abuses.

###

Contact: Mrs. Geneviève Villeneuve-Patry  
Communications Coordinator, Lawyers Without Borders Canada  
Telephone: 418.907.2607 #107  
Email: [genevieve.villeneuve-patry@asfcanada.ca](mailto:genevieve.villeneuve-patry@asfcanada.ca)