



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE CIRCULATION**

José Efraín Ríos Montt José Rodríguez and Sanchez face justice for atrocities committed during armed conflict

Lawyers Without Borders Canada Welcomes the Opening of the Trial Against the Former Head of State of Guatemala

Guatemala, January 31, 2013 – Lawyers Without Borders Canada (LWBC) welcomes the decision rendered last Monday on January 28, 2013, by pre-trial Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez of the High Risk B Court (*Juzgado Primero B de Mayor Riesgo*) to trial for war crimes and genocide the former Head of State, José Efraín Ríos Montt, and former Chief of Military Intelligence, Mr. José Rodríguez Sanchez. Today, the parties will commence disclosure proceedings with the accused parties to be committed for trial in approximately two months.

Edgar Fernando Pérez and his team at BDH (*Asociación bufete jurídico de derechos humanos* - Law Office of Human Rights), the main partners of LWBC in Guatemala, are ensuring the legal representation for CALDH (*Centro para la acción legal en derechos humanos* - The Guatemalan Centre for Human Rights Legal Action) and AJR (*Asociación para la justicia y reconciliación* - Justice and Reconciliation Association); the plaintiff organizations representing the victims in this matter.

The opening of this trial represents a substantial advancement in the fight against impunity, truth and justice for the more than 200,000 victims of the Guatemalan armed conflict that lasted 36 years.

The ex Head of State Rios Mont was under house arrest since January 2012 when the Attorney General formally filed an indictment against him for notably ordering the massacre of more than 1,700 indigenous people within Ixil region of Guatemala during his time as Head of State (1982-1983).

"LWBC is proud to have contributed to the work of the representatives of the victims that led to this historic achievement. The trial of the former senior state leaders of Guatemala reflects the will to overcome the wounds of the past and allowing justice to take its course in the interest of truth and reconciliation", said Pascal Paradis, Executive Director of LWBC. "Mr. Rios Montt faces very serious charges. The light must be shed on the allegations of genocide and gross violations of human rights against him, all within a fair trial", said Julie Dubé-Gagnon, Head of mission for LWBC in Guatemala. LWBC acknowledge the courage and discipline of Judge Gálvez and prosecutors, and congratulate the representatives of the victims and LWBC's staff that have worked together to prepare for this trial.

LWBC notes that in May 2012, Mr. Ríos Montt was also accused of crimes against humanity in another [case of massacre in the municipality of Las Dos Erres](#) in Petén, where more than 200 people died. On the August 2 and the March 12, 2012, the Criminal Court of First Instance of Guatemala (*Tribunal primero de*

sentencia penal, narcoactividad y delitos contra el ambiente) also sentenced five former soldiers to 6060 years of imprisonment for torture, rape and murder of mostly non-combatant civilians (including pregnant women, infants and children) and crimes against humanity. LWBC has also supported the work of the representatives of the plaintiff in this case.

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About Lawyers Without Borders Canada : LWBC is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to defend the rights of the most vulnerable individuals or groups by enhancing access to justice and legal representation. Since 2009, LWBC has been working in Guatemala in order to improve and ensure quality and free legal representation to victims of gross human rights violations.

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