

# ONE BY ONE

## GUATEMALA

A Guatemalan branch of One by One is in its exploratory stages. The initial plan is to follow the One by One dialogue format in rendering healing for the surviving victims of the Civil War (1960-1996) in which over 200,000 mostly Maya peoples were killed.

"A report on human rights in Guatemala during the country's 36-year civil war has accused the state of undeniable responsibility for genocide. The report by the Historical Clarification Commission said the majority of human rights violations against the country's indigenous Mayan people occurred with the knowledge or by order of the highest authorities of the state.

The co-ordinator for the commission, Mr. Christian Tomuschat, said that after investigating thousands of cases of torture, disappearance and executions, they concluded that at least 200,000 people had died. Hundreds of villages were destroyed and more than one million people driven from their homes during the conflict. State forces are blamed for more than 93% of documented violations of human rights."  
(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/286402.stm>)

According to Human Rights Watch: "A dozen years after the end of Guatemala's brutal civil war, impunity remains the norm when it comes to human rights violations. Ongoing violence and intimidation threaten to reverse the little progress that has been made toward promoting accountability. Guatemala's weak and corrupt law enforcement institutions have proved incapable of containing the powerful organized crime groups that, among other things, are believed to be responsible for attacks on human rights defenders, judges, prosecutors, and others."  
(<http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2009/guatemala>)

"Guatemala continues to suffer the effects of the 36-year civil war. A United Nations-sponsored Commission on Historical Clarification (CEH) estimated that as many as 200,000 people were killed during the conflict. The CEH attributed 93 percent of the human rights abuses it documented to state security forces and concluded that the military had carried out "acts of

genocide." Very few of those responsible for the grave human rights violations during the civil war have been held accountable. Of the 626 massacres documented by the commission, only three cases have been successfully prosecuted in Guatemalan courts." (Source:

<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/guatemala>)

"Guatemalans seeking accountability for these abuses face daunting obstacles. Prosecutors and investigators receive grossly inadequate training and resources. The army and other state institutions resist cooperating fully with investigations into abuses committed by current or former members." (Source: <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2009/guatemala>)

The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH)\* concludes that the structure and nature of economic, cultural and social relations in Guatemala are marked by profound exclusion, antagonism and conflict - a reflection of its colonial history. The proclamation of independence in 1821, an event prompted by the country's elite, saw the creation of an authoritarian State which excluded the majority of the population, was racist in its precepts and practices, and served to protect the economic interests of the privileged minority. The evidence for this, throughout Guatemala's history, but particularly so during the armed confrontation, lies in the fact that the violence was fundamentally directed by the State against the excluded, the poor and above all, the Mayan people, as well as against those who fought for justice and greater social equality.

The anti-democratic nature of the Guatemalan political tradition has its roots in an economic structure, which is marked by the concentration of productive wealth in the hands of a minority. This established the foundations of a system of multiple exclusions, including elements of racism, which is, in turn, the most profound manifestation of a violent and dehumanizing social system. The State gradually evolved as an instrument for the protection of this structure, guaranteeing the continuation of exclusion and injustice. (\* Source:

<http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/conc1.html>)

As of 2011, little has been done to assess the psycho-social damages still afflicting the mostly Mayan victims and survivors; nor the economic damages suffered when landowners were stripped of their property, and entire villages destroyed. The current economic and political infrastructure is largely controlled by former military and police who were directly involved in violent acts during the conflict. Many of these perpetrators live today among their victims. As a result, survivors of the genocide terrorized by the atrocities, are still afraid to give their personal testimonies, even to their own children. The real danger of this is that many young citizens are unwittingly voting for candidates who may have persecuted their parents and grandparents.