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## **Historic conviction brings long-awaited justice in Guatemala**

The conviction of Guatemala's ex-president General Efraín Ríos Montt for genocide and crimes against humanity during his time in office is a historic step in the nation's long struggle for justice, Amnesty International said.

Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt was convicted and sentenced to 80 years for his role as the intellectual author of the killings of 1,771 individuals and the forced displacement of tens of thousands more from the Ixil triangle region of southern Quiché department in 1982 and 1983 in the midst of Guatemala's internal armed conflict.

Gen. José Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez, General Ríos Montt's head of intelligence during his time in power, was found not guilty on the same charges.

"With this conviction, Guatemala leads by example in a region where entrenched impunity for past crimes sadly remains the norm," said Sebastian Elgueta, Guatemala Researcher at Amnesty International.

"Guatemala must now follow up on this historic moment by ensuring that all those who took part in the murder, torture, rape and disappearance of tens of thousands of people are brought to justice."

A UN-backed truth commission found that some 200,000 people were killed or disappeared during Guatemala's 36-year civil war (1960-1996). Over 80% were of indigenous Mayan descent.

Despite recent efforts to strengthen justice and accountability for past abuses, the Guatemalan armed forces remain uncooperative when it comes to investigations of violations committed during the armed conflict.

The army continues to refuse to provide information to investigations into killings, enforced disappearances, the use of rape as a weapon of war, and other crimes committed during the conflict.

The failure to provide any documentation places a huge burden on families and victims who pursue justice, or simply seeking to find the whereabouts of their disappeared loved ones.

"Today's conviction should serve as a reminder to the current government of its duty to victims of the war. The President should use this opportunity to ensure genuine cooperation of the army with investigations into past crimes."

### **AT A GLANCE**

Guatemala's internal armed conflict took place between 1960 and 1996.

More than 200,000 men, women and children were murdered or disappeared.

Effrain Rios Montt was in office between March 1982 and August 1983.

The conflict ended in 1996 with the signing of a Peace Accord.

A UN-sponsored Commission of Historical Clarification said the Guatemalan state was responsible for most abuses.

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