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## **Guatemala: Fifth former soldier convicted over role in Dos Erres massacre**

The conviction of a former soldier for his role in a bloody massacre in Guatemala in 1982 marks a further step towards justice for the many victims and their family members, Amnesty International said.

Pedro Pimentel Ríos is the fifth former soldier from an elite Guatemalan army unit to be sentenced to 6,060 years in prison for taking part in a massacre the village of Dos Erres that left more than 250 people dead.

Pimentel Ríos was extradited from the USA in July 2011, a month before four other soldiers in his unit were convicted and sentenced over the incident.

A sixth former soldier, Gilberto Jordán, has confessed to US authorities that he also took part in the killings, including throwing a baby into the village well. He was never prosecuted in the USA for these killings and is due to be deported back to Guatemala after completing a 10-year sentence for immigration violations in the USA.

“For decades, the victims of grave human rights violations including the Dos Erres killings have clamoured for justice, truth and reparation,” said Sebastian Elgueta, Central America Researcher at Amnesty International.

“The convictions in these cases – while addressing only a tiny fraction of the huge number of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the decades-long conflict – mark an important step in ending impunity for these crimes. However, higher ranking officers who were responsible have still to be brought to justice.”

On 5 December 1982, a Guatemalan elite army unit known as the “kaibiles” – which Pedro Pimentel Ríos personally trained – entered Dos Erres, located in the northern department of Petén, and tortured and killed more than 250 men, women and children over the course of three days before razing the village. Many of the women and girls were raped, and numerous villagers, including children, were thrown into the village well.

A UN-backed truth commission found that during Guatemala’s 36-year internal armed conflict some 200,000 people were killed or disappeared and security forces committed more than 600 mass killings, mainly in rural and indigenous communities.

An investigation into the Dos Erres massacre was opened in 1994, but dozens of appeals filed by the defence caused the case to languish in the courts for years.

Survivors of the massacre testified at the trial, and previously told Amnesty International that an official at a local military base had ordered the operation to cover up the rape of a village woman by a military

officer.

Following the convictions last August, a forensic anthropologist who testified in the trial received a death threat.

Amnesty International continues to call for an end to impunity for all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict.

"While there have been many positive steps in recent months, including the decision to place former de facto head of state Efraín Ríos Montt on trial for genocide, much more remains to be done," said Sebastian Elgueta.

"The many victims and their families will not rest until they see justice, truth and reparation for the widespread human rights violations that occurred during Guatemala's civil war."