

DURING THE MIDNIGHT HOURS OF DECEMBER 1 - 2, 1990, THE GUATEMALAN ARMY OPENED FIRE ON A GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS PROTESTING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN SANTIAGO ATITLAN, A TOWN OF 45,000 PERSONS. THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE UNARMED, AND INCLUDED THE MAYOR AND MAYOR-ELECT. RESIDENTS OF SANTIAGO ATITLAN ARE IN THE GREAT MAJORITY MEMBERS OF THE TZUTUHIL INDIGENOUS ETHNIC GROUP. THEY HAVE FACED CONSTANT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES EVER SINCE THEIR TOWN WAS MILITARIZED IN THE LATE 1970'S. THE IMMEDIATE TOLL OF THE MASSACRE WAS LISTED AS 11 DEAD AND 23 WOUNDED. THREE OF THE ORIGINAL VICTIMS WERE CHILDREN, RANGING FROM 10 TO 14 YEARS OLD; FOUR OTHERS HAVE DIED FROM THEIR WOUNDS AND 9 PERSONS HAVE BEEN DISAPPEARED FROM THE AREA SINCE THE MASSACRE TOOK PLACE.

THE RESIDENTS OF SANTIAGO ATITLAN RESPONDED TO THE MASSACRE BY INTENSIFYING THEIR PROTESTS. THE FUNERAL FOR THE VICTIMS WERE ATTENDED BY TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RESIDENTS. A PETITION DRAWN UP IMMEDIATELY CALLED FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE ARMY BASE AND THE NATIONAL POLICE FROM THE AREA. 15,000 PERSONS HAD SIGNED THE PETITION WITHIN 24 HOURS OF THE MASSACRE, AND EVENTUALLY 35,000 SIGNATURES HAD BEEN PLACED ON THE PETITION.

THE CRY OF THE RESIDENTS OF SANTIAGO ATITLAN HAS BEEN ECHOED INTERNATIONALLY THROUGH PROTESTS, VIGILS, LETTER WRITING, TELEX AND PETITION CAMPAIGNS. VIGILS WERE HELD IN VARIOUS CITIES AND STATES OF THE U.S. ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7TH. A PARTIAL LIST OF PLACES WHERE THEY WERE HELD INCLUDES WASHINGTON, D.C., TEXAS, ARIZONA, NEW MEXICO, LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO, AND SEATTLE.

BELOW, WE INCLUDE THE TEXT OF THE PETITION SIGNED BY THE RESIDENTS OF SANTIAGO ATITLAN:

**PETITION BY THE RESIDENTS OF SANTIAGO ATITLAN**

TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA AND COMMANDER GENERAL OF THE ARMY,

TO THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF JUSTICE AND OF THE JUDICIAL BODY,

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE BODY,

TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROCURATOR,

TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOLOLA:

To the Constitutional President of the Republic, the President of the Legislative Body, the Presiding Judge of the Supreme Court of Justice, the Human Rights Procurator, in support of Article 28 of the Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, all of the subscribed address ourselves most sincerely to you, declaring the following:

a) At twenty two hundred hours fifteen minutes on the first day of December of the current year, thirty to forty members of the National Army arrived at the home of Mr. Andrés Sapalú Ajuchán, intending to murder him, he being an honorable person from this town. Said Army members' detachment is headquartered in the "Panabaj" district of this town. Not reaching their objectives in that the above referenced Mr. Sapalú Ajuchán did not come out, said Army members surrounded his home, and striking the door with their weapons, they attempted to knock it down, not reaching their objective as they had in similar incidents.

b) In actions such as the one indicated in the above paragraph members of the National Army serving in the Detachment located in the above mentioned district have taken it upon themselves to murder humble working people from this town, committing abuses and violations of Human rights against this suffering people of Santiago Atitlán.

c) Because we have defended our constitutional human rights, we have been victims of abuses, murders, and constant violations of our physical integrity.

d) In response to such circumstances, created by the criminal actions of the both the members of the National Army and the National Police, and tired of suffering constant violations directly to our flesh and blood, to the point of not having private property respected, and in view of the attempted murder of our countryman Andrés Sapalú Ajuchán, as we indicated in paragraph (a) of this official document, the people of Santiago Atitlán as a whole decided to dialogue with the members of the National Army Detachment headquartered in the "Panabaj" district of this town at a distance of two kilometers, in that they, along with the National Police, had been the perpetrators of constant massacres, in order that they not continue to massacre our beloved people of Atitlán in the savage way they have attacked us. A majority grouping was formed of honorable persons so that they could be granted a peaceful dialogue with the

Commander of the Military Detachment and lay out to them the abuses committed by the members of the Army of this detachment, the violations and murders of men and children who have been victims of such abuses. But the above cited members of the National Army, instead of attending to them, responded savagely against the people of Atitlán, and with heavy caliber arms they fired on the population as a whole, the population being defenseless and unarmed, in that we are protectors of peace, and shedding the blood unjustly of men and children who seeking peace met up with the death of our "Atitlaneca" brothers and sisters, several residents of this town having lost their lives, including, as we record, men and children. In response to this criminal act which brings mourning upon the residents of this town, we address ourselves to the entities and institutions mentioned above so that, in support of our constitutional rights, they may immediately attend to us and give us emergency support.

WE ASK

I) That a detailed investigation be immediately made of the violent acts which occurred in this town of Santiago Atitlán in the Department of Sololá at twenty two hundred hours on the first of December of this year.

II) That those responsible for this massacre be handed over to the Courts of Justice and drastically sentenced in keeping with the criminal law in effect in the country, and that this massacre not be left with impunity as has happened on so many other occasions.

III) That immediately, for the good of our families and especially our minor children who have committed no wrong, that the Military Detachment located in the "Panabaj" district of this town and the Sub-Station of the National Police be immediately withdrawn, in that rather than physically protect us it is they who under the influence of alcohol turn into the murderers of the residents of this town, massacring innocent, working people devoted to agriculture for the sustenance of themselves, their families, and Guatemala as a whole, which situation has incensed the patient people of Santiago Atitlán with the massacre that occurred yesterday, on December first of the current year at twenty two hundred hours, in which this population was attacked with heaving caliber weaponry, and in which several persons lost their lives, being honorable residents of this municipality, among them men and

children. That upon withdrawal of the Military Detachment and the Sub-Station of the National police, in order to defend and develop our community, we formally commit ourselves to immediately organize a Committee for Security and Development for the town.

IV) We state on the record that as of this moment the military authorities will be held responsible for any abuse or reprisal against the outgoing or incoming Civilian authorities or the population in general.

FOR THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY OF OUR PEOPLE, WE DEMAND THAT EXPONDED UPON FROM THE AUTHORITIES TO WHOM WE ADDRESS OURSELVES.

SINCERELY YOURS.

Original: Constitutional President of the Republic of Guatemala and Commander General of the Army  
cc: Presiding Judge of the Supreme Court of Justice and the Judicial Body  
cc: President of the Legislative Body  
cc: Human Rights Procurator  
cc: file

Signed by more than 35,000 persons residing in SANTIAGO ATITLAN

NOTE: Copied textually from the original handed over to the authorities by the people of SANTIAGO ATITLAN.

[Text provided by the Mutual Support Group, GAM - 5a. Av., 9-11 Zona 12, Guatemala, Central America. Phone: (011-502-2) 71-97-35.]

[Translation by GCC]

