



#RenunciaYa demonstration. Photo credit: Roderico Díaz

This year, we witnessed incredible movements for change in Guatemala. In the face of rampant corruption, new alliances emerged across broad sectors of civil society, while massive mobilizations against impunity saw more people than ever before take to the streets in protest.

As 2015 comes to a close, we take a moment to reflect on the past year and the work we have accomplished together as the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala. We remain grateful to our current and former companions, sponsoring communities, house party and tour hosts, generous donors and friends that not only take action and stand up for justice and the self-determination of all peoples, but also financially sustain our ongoing solidarity work. Join us as we celebrate the many successes and goals we accomplished together as a network this year!

Justice and Accountability

In support of Guatemalans who seek an end to impunity and justice for crimes committed during the internal armed conflict.

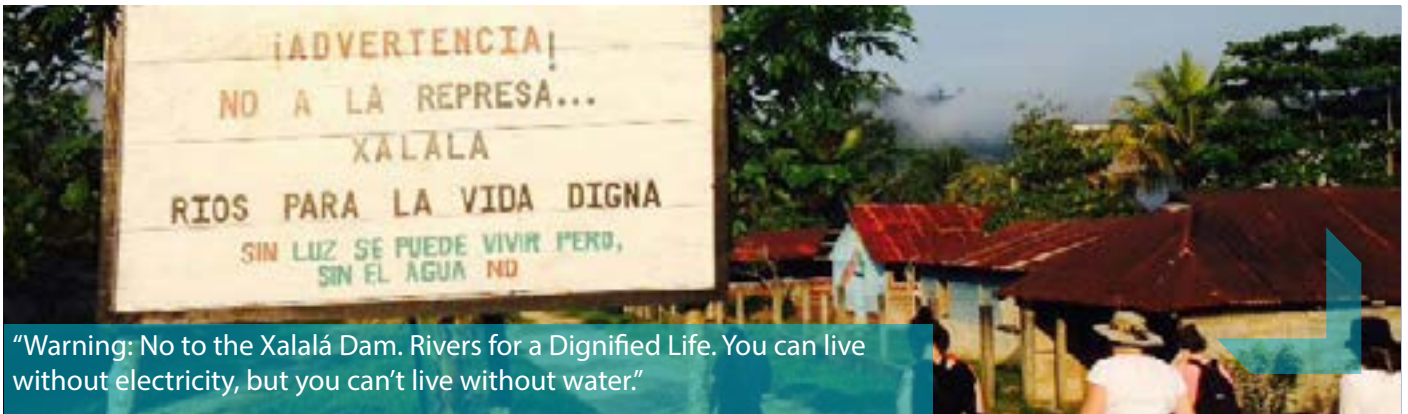
For nearly half of 2015, Guatemalans took to the streets every Saturday to demand the resignation of President Otto Pérez Molina and an end to widespread corruption. On April 16, the UN Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) released evidence revealing the existence of La Línea, a customs fraud network dating back to the time of the internal armed conflict, which implicated high-ranking officials in Pérez Molina's government, including ex Vice President Roxana Baldetti. Over the next several months, the CICIG released a steady flow of evidence pointing to other cases of corruption, eventually implicating the President himself. On September 3, after being stripped of presidential immunity, Pérez Molina resigned and was subsequently arrested and indicted on charges of fraud, illicit association and bribery.

During this historic year of protest in Guatemala, we:

- Documented and provided [extensive analysis as the corruption scandals unfolded](#), live-tweeting messages from the weekly protests in Guatemala's central square. Provided live coverage of Pérez Molina's indictment and lead-up to the national elections.
- Delivered a [statement of solidarity](#) and ongoing support to the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) prior to the opening of the January 5, 2015 retrial against former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt for genocide. [Maintained international focus on the retrial](#) throughout the suspensions, stalls, and legal maneuvering by the defense.
- Provided live coverage of the verdict that convicted ex-police chief Pedro García Arredondo for the 1980 [burning of the Spanish Embassy](#). Arredondo was sentenced to 40 years in prison for crimes against humanity and an additional 50 years in prison for the murder of two students.



Women hold up a banner reading "Yes, there was genocide and sexual violence," outside Ríos Montt trial on July 23, 2015



“Warning: No to the Xalalá Dam. Rivers for a Dignified Life. You can live without electricity, but you can’t live without water.”

On the 2015 “Rivers for Life” delegation, visiting communities resisting the proposed Xalalá Dam

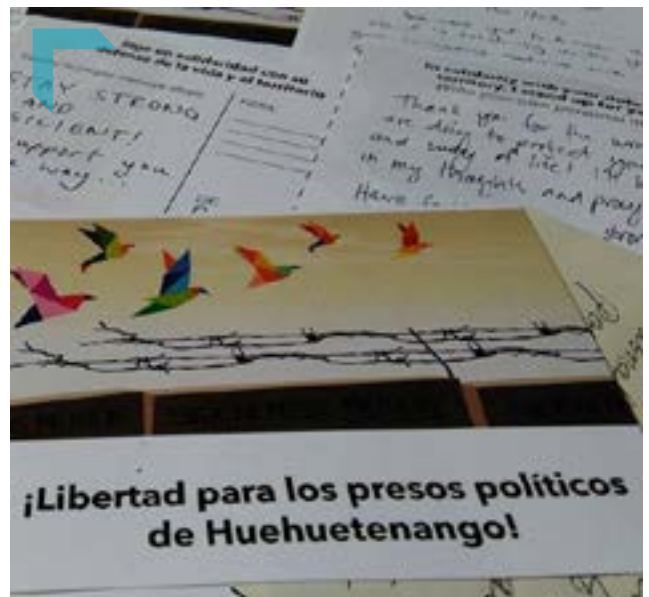
Defense of Life and Territory

Advocating together with communities as they defend their lives and territories against unjust trade policies and the imposition of resource extraction projects by international and national actors.

The criminalization and violence against community leaders who oppose mega-development projects continued with increased intensity in 2015. In an attempt to silence opposition, the Guatemalan state, together with the support of transnational companies, arrested and charged seven land defenders from the department of Huehuetenango alone.

With a critical need for solidarity and action, this year we:

- Organized a 10-day [“Rivers for Life” delegation](#) to visit 6 ACODET communities defending their land against the development of the proposed Xalalá Dam. Brought our collective concerns directly to the U.S. Embassy and Inter-American Development Bank.
- Celebrated the [cancellation of the contract](#) for the Xalalá Dam feasibility study following the 2014 NISGUA-ACODET speaking tour during which hundreds took action to demand the revocation of the contract.
- Delivered [hundreds of handwritten postcards](#) of support to political prisoners from Huehuetenango, jailed for their opposition to hydroelectric projects.
- Built international support and awareness for the retrial of [Saúl Mendez and Rogelio Velásquez](#), two Huehuetenango land defenders sentenced to 33 years in prison. Celebrated when both were absolved due to a lack of evidence.
- Concluded a [mapping project](#) that documents mining licenses granted throughout Guatemala without the free, prior and informed consent of impacted communities.
- Collaborated to unearth and publish information on Tahoe Resources’ [militarized security strategy](#). [Published wiretap evidence](#) released during the criminal trial against Tahoe’s former head of security, Alberto Rotondo, confirming that the shooting of unarmed protesters on April 27, 2013 was a deliberate act of violence.
- Co-wrote a [letter of concern for Alex Reynoso](#), community leader opposing the Escobal project, who was shot along with two others on October 17. The letter, signed by fifty-five organizations and 2,700 individuals, requested a complete investigation and protection for Alex, his family and the peaceful resistance of Mataquescuintla.



Postcards demanding the freedom for political prisoners from Huehuetenango.

- Recorded 30 interviews with community members about the militarization of southeastern Guatemala by state and private security forces protecting Tahoe Resources' Escobal mine. Developed and launched the campaign "[We are still here. We are still in resistance.](#)" to draw attention to demands for self-determination and a sustainable future.
- [Coordinated 28 events](#) for the "Tahoe on Trial: Guatemalan Communities Rise up to Defend Land and Life" speaking tour with local NISGUA activists and leaders across 12 different US cities. Launched an online campaign that sent a [unified message to the US Embassy](#), reaching nearly 150,000 people on social media.

On tour, our base sent a unified message to the US Embassy on Twitter:

#TahoeResources uses the #Guatemala military & US private security to mine w/o consent #TahoeOnTrial #USEmbassyGuate



Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP)

Accompanying Guatemalans in efforts to promote peace and justice; working towards our collective transformation.

International accompaniment continues to be a strong focus of our work and this year, we:

- [Supported 32 international accompaniers](#) who gave 115 months of accompaniment to 375 human rights defenders from over 25 organizations in 12 Guatemalan departments, as a member of the ACOGUATE coalition.
- Added a full-time staff position of Accompaniment Coordinator to support NISGUA accompaniers and resource ACOGUATE project management.
- Held our intensive, weeklong international human rights observer training, with experts in the fields of Guatemalan history, current events and militarization. This year we incorporated local grassroots activism into our training by participating in "Reclaim MLK" actions in Oakland, CA.
- Politically educated and supported accompaniers to undertake critical grassroots advocacy and education with their networks. In 2015, accompaniers sent over a dozen in-depth reports to local and regional networks. Returned accompaniers participated in report back sessions and speaking tours across the U.S. and screened a documentary produced by a former accompanier.
- Built community, strengthened commitments and shared updates at the annual GAP Gathering. This year's gathering took place at the World Fellowship Center in New Hampshire.
- Presented on the "[Power of Accompaniment](#)" panel with International Mayan League/USA at the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

"The work is ours. It is our country and it is for us to do. But you help open space for us to do that. Your presence is important."

Genocide case witness from the Ixcán

U.S. Connections and Movement Building

Drawing deeper connections of international solidarity; linking communities in the U.S. and Guatemala in the global movements for justice and self-determination.

In 2015, the NISGUA staff and board collectively made the decision to refocus and re-prioritize our work building with communities here in the States. We recognize the importance of drawing deeper connections between frontline communities here and those that we work with in Guatemala. Together, across borders, we can strengthen our movements against state violence and repression and create ecologically just and culturally resilient ways of life. As we continue to seek transformation and change, this year we:

- Led a 6-day delegation for the leadership of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, VA.
- Developed new strategic plans and goals with the NISGUA staff and board at the annual in-person meeting, resulting in the launching of a new NISGUA website and staff restructuring to focus on building links with communities working for ecological justice and self-determination within the U.S.
- Promoted NISGUA’s curriculum for tailored talks and workshops contracted by diverse organizations, schools, and delegations in the US. and Guatemala.
- Coordinated [house parties](#) and movement gatherings in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Washington D.C., New York, and Toronto to strengthen our grassroots communities through the sharing of knowledge, food, and culture.
- Invited investigative journalist [Gustavo Illescas](#) to share his political analysis and perspectives with activists and supporters in the Bay Area in the wake of the recent popular mobilizations in Guatemala.

“Volunteering with NISGUA allows me to reconnect with my Guatemalan roots. I feel energized to build community and defend our Mother Earth along with our brothers and sisters in Guatemala. I feel part of a movement that transcends borders and is creating a new path for future generations.”

Natasha Kerr, LA Organizer

“In the struggle to resist a transnational company like Tahoe Resources, we need communities in the U.S. to act in solidarity. CODIDENA’s ongoing relationship with NISGUA is based on mutuality and plays an important part in that struggle.” *Llan Carlos Dávila, 2015 NISGUA tour speaker and CODIDENA representative*



About NISGUA

The Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) employs strategic, creative and coordinated grassroots activism and advocacy to pursue justice for war crimes, to change harmful U.S. policies and to promote sustainable communities in Guatemala. NISGUA provides human rights accompaniment to Guatemalans whose work puts them at risk of threats and attacks.