



Our 2016 Accomplishments!

Our work this year focused on the connections between movements for indigenous rights and community self-determination, struggles against military and police violence, and grassroots efforts to protect land. NISGUA has long worked in solidarity with Guatemalan communities resisting the impacts of imperialism abroad. With an expanded U.S. presence in 2016, we are working with increased capacity to draw links between communities struggling for self-determination and justice in Guatemala and in the U.S.

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with heartfelt gratitude for all of our current and former companions, sponsoring communities, interns, house party and tour hosts, generous donors, and friends that not only took action and stood up for justice, but also continue to financially sustain our work. Join us in celebrating all we have accomplished together as a network in 2016!

This year on tour: Guatemalan women healing towards justice

Women survivors from Sepur Zarco made important strides for gender justice this year, by bravely testifying to being held as sexual and domestic slaves by the Guatemalan military during the 1980s. The successful conviction of two former military officials marked the first time in the Americas that these types of crimes were prosecuted as crimes against humanity. To commemorate the important work survivors are doing, we organized a 20-day U.S. tour featuring the Alliance to Break Silence and Impunity, the multidisciplinary coalition that supported the women plaintiffs through strategic litigation, with healing and empowerment at the center. On tour, we:

- **Reached 900+ people at 26 events** with local organizers working on issues of gender justice, connecting the themes of militarism and sexual violence with movements for healing, resistance, and resilience.
- Joined hundreds of activists at the U.S./Mexico border in Nogales, Arizona/Sonora at the **School of the Americas Watch Convergence** to denounce past and ongoing U.S. militarization.
- Held meaningful exchanges with indigenous leaders and others working on issues of sexual violence, drawing connections between the Sepur Zarco case and movements for indigenous self-determination.



From left: Guatemalan community psychologist and this year's tour speaker, Maudi Tzay, meets with indigenous leaders on Indigenous Peoples' Day; Ms. Tzay denounces ongoing U.S. militarism and sexual violence at the border; Ms. Tzay connects with radio listeners in California.

Justice and Accountability

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

In January, we reported on the **high-profile arrests of several military officials**, charged with forced disappearance and other crimes against humanity following the exhumation of mass graves inside the CREOMPAZ military base in Alta Verapaz. We extensively reported on and accompanied the indictment process in what has become the largest case of forced disappearance in Latin America's history.

While the legal victory in the Sepur Zarco case and the arrests of other high-profile former military officials show progress in the search for justice for crimes of the past, these efforts have been met with continued defamation and attacks by right-wing military supporters against human rights defenders and journalists, as well as national and international observers. Within this context, this year we:

- Provided in-depth coverage and accompaniment during the **Sepur Zarco trial and verdict**.
- Translated daily reports from the Center for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH) about the **closed-door genocide retrial against Efraín Ríos Montt** and Rodríguez Sánchez, and closely accompanied witnesses and supporters outside of the trial in Nebaj.
- Provided coverage of other major cases for crimes against humanity, including the 1981 disappearance of 14-year-old **Marco Antonio Molina Theissen**, another arrest related to the Dos Erres massacre, and other advancements in the Diario Militar case.



A member of the NISGUA network holds up a sign in support of the women survivors of Sepur Zarco. For more photos, visit our Facebook page.

Defense of Life & Territory

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

This year, we saw continued global resistance by environmental and land defenders against neoliberal agendas that promote resource extraction, particularly in the Global South. The Guatemalan government, with the support of North American and European extractive and security companies, continued to use violent repression and criminalization of community leaders as an attempt to silence the peaceful defense of water, land, and the right to free, prior, and informed consent. Advocating together with environmental defenders in Guatemala, this year we:

- Extensively monitored the social and environmental impacts of Tahoe Resources' Escobal mine in southeastern Guatemala; coordinated media support and advocacy with local grassroots organizations, including filing a complaint with the **U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission against Tahoe** for failure to disclose to shareholders the widespread opposition to the mine; supported youth using art to develop their political vision and commemorate their martyrs, including 16-year-old environmental activist Topacio Reynoso, killed in 2014; researched mining expansion within the region and demanded transparency from **companies with concessions in the area**.
- Organized an **8-day "Communities Rise Up"** delegation to Guatemala, in which participants visited communities in resistance to the Escobal mine, responding to requests from communities for advocacy and education in the U.S.
- Responded to international calls for solidarity after **Lenca environmental activist Berta Cáceres** was murdered in Honduras.
- Participated in an **observer mission to document human rights abuses** in the region of Ixquis, where communities are impacted by hydroelectric dams owned by Promoción y Desarrollo Hídrico, Sociedad Anónima (PDH S.A.); co-authored a letter to international financial institutions requesting divestment from the projects, citing rampant environmental and human rights violations.



"We are not criminals, we are defenders of territory." The recently-released political prisoners are welcomed back home to Huehuetenango.

This year, we provided extensive communications coverage and international accompaniment to [political prisoners from northern Huehuetenango](#), criminalized for their roles as ancestral and community authorities from regions in opposition to hydroelectric dams in their territory.

During their imprisonment, members of the NISGUA base wrote them hundreds of solidarity messages and advocated for their release. [We celebrated this year when all seven defenders](#) were freed after more than a year in pre-trial detention.

Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP)

International accompaniment provides a dissuasive presence at the request of Guatemalan organizations and communities who are at risk for their work seeking justice for crimes of the past and defending their lives, culture and territory against the imposition of resource extraction projects.

While an intersectional vision of socioeconomic justice and liberation has historically been at the core of accompaniment training and practice, this year GAP forwarded the expansion of racial justice throughout the organization and within our network. With GAP Council, NISGUA board, activists and staff as drivers of organizational transformation, our racial justice initiative was launched this past Labor Day weekend with a training facilitated by Catalyst Project and a network planning session in Colorado. This year, we also:

- Added an Accompaniment Coordinator staff position to the ACOGUATE coalition in Guatemala, strengthening project management and providing key regional coordination to accompanied people and organizations in the Ixcán.
- Supported 31 international accompaniers who provided accompaniment to 340 human rights defenders from 26 organizations across Guatemala, as a member of the [ACOGUATE coalition](#).
- Expanded accompanier outreach to promote the participation of people of color, indigenous/indigenous descent, poor/working class, and queer people in GAP.
- 9 U.S.-based Sponsoring Communities and 5 NISGUA accompaniers amplified the work of Guatemalan human rights defenders across the U.S. through the creation and circulation of in-depth reports, newsletters and articles to local and regional networks, as well as dozens of local events, 5 speaking tours and two Congressional briefings.



"NISGUA plays a critical role connecting U.S.-based activists with struggles in Guatemala. Working with NISGUA was inspiring because of their deeply intersectional politics, and their thoughtful approach to connecting their principled international solidarity work with work against militarism, racism, and empire at home. We learned a lot about how they leverage privilege and power in international contexts and how the mandate of their organization moves them to connect with racial justice work in the U.S.

-- Catalyst Project



Members of the 2016 "Communities Rise Up" delegation.

Expanding the ways to connect with NISGUA

This year, we made major improvements on our website and e-communications, publishing several bilingual in-depth reports and more than 60 original pieces on our blog. With expanded Spanish language materials on social media, there are now more ways to connect with NISGUA! Visit our website, and follow us on Twitter and Facebook!

U.S. Connections & Movement Building

Drawing deeper connections through international solidarity, linking communities in the U.S. and Guatemala in the global movement for justice and self-determination.

NISGUA staff and board remain committed to strengthening our work in the U.S. toward building mutual connections between social movements working for justice and self-determination in the U.S. and in Guatemala. With a focus on challenging U.S. militarism as a force that threatens indigenous peoples and communities of color both abroad and at home, we engaged on a local and national level, with an interest in creating strategic linkages across borders. This year, we:

- Joined over **300 social justice organizations from across the Americas** for a weekend of community, education, and action against U.S. militarism at the Convergence on the U.S./Mexico Border in Nogales, Arizona/Sonora, organized by School of the Americas Watch and partner organizations.
- Endorsed and participated in actions in the San Francisco Bay Area to **stop Urban Shield**, an international war games and weapons expo held in Pleasanton, CA which supports conditions of state violence by outfitting and training police in repressive, militarized policing techniques.
- Leveraged grassroots fundraising to prioritize the participation of directly impacted people, particularly indigenous women and women of color, in our annual GAP Gathering and delegation to Guatemala, awarding a total of \$4,710 to seven participants.
- Coordinated **house parties and movement gatherings** in Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oakland, Seattle, and Washington D.C., building community through political education.
- **Gathered photographs** from across the United States expressing solidarity with the women survivors of Sepur Zarco, whose courageous work toward justice and healing set an international legal precedent, while energizing our local movements to end gendered violence.

Help us celebrate 35 years!

As we move into our 36th year, we invite you to become a sustaining donor. By enrolling as a monthly donor, you can help ensure that we sustain our advocacy efforts, respond in moments of crisis, and continue our long-term accompaniment of Guatemala human rights defenders.

Donate online!



About NISGUA

NISGUA builds mutually beneficial grassroots ties between the people of the U.S. and Guatemala and advocates for grassroots alternatives to challenge elite power structures and oppressive U.S. economic and foreign policy.