



ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION (AJR)

AJR members outside the Courthouse during a press conference on the genocide trial. Photo by NISGUA, 2025.

Mayan genocide survivors who brought two dictators to justice

Following the Peace Accords signed in 1996, the Association of Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) was legally established in Guatemala in 2000. However, it had been organizing for years before that while in exile and in communities of genocide survivors. When the AJR was formed, its members filed charges against high-ranking military officials for crimes committed during the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC), particularly during the Lucas García period (1981–1982) and the Ríos Montt period (1983). The AJR focuses on access to criminal justice, monitoring cases involving serious human rights violations, delivering dignified reparations for survivors, and the promotion of historical memory around these violations.

Survivors Who Became Guardians of History

The AJR is composed of a board of directors, regional coordinators, and local grassroots committees, positions held by young people, granddaughters and grandsons, as well as grand-

mothers and grandfathers who survived the IAC — an intergenerational structure. The more than 214 members belong to the Achi', Kaqchikel, Ixil, K'iche', Q'eqchi', Chuj, and Q'anjob'al Maya peoples, men and women who are survivors or children of survivors from 22 communities in five regions of the country— Ixil, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, Ixcán, and Rabinal — among the hardest hit by the IAC and the genocidal policies of that era.

NISGUA's Solidarity with the AJR

Although NISGUA's direct relationship with the AJR began at the time of its founding, we had already maintained decades-long ties with regional survivors' organizations. We were present every day during the 2013 and 2024 genocide trials, supporting witnesses and survivors. We also accompany commemorations and visit our partners' territories, because our presence and solidarity with the AJR communities has always remained constant.

The resistance of the people continues. After enduring the imposition of terror and silence for more than two decades, survivors demand justice in order to change the present, and build a future of peace.

The Path to Justice

The AJR's legal process began in 2000. As a matter of legal strategy, the AJR determined that the Quiché department would take priority due to the events that occurred in the Ixil region between 1981 and 1983, when serious human rights violations were committed. Since then, the AJR has remained in the courts, steadfastly sustaining this struggle for truth, justice, reparations, and non-repetition.



Ixil Genocide Case – Ríos Montt

Between March 19 and May 10, 2013, former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt and his former director of military intelligence, José Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez, stood trial for genocide and crimes against humanity in a Guatemalan national court. The case covered atrocities committed from March 1982 to October 1983, during his de facto government, in the Ixil Maya region. On May 10, he was found guilty and sentenced to 80 years in prison.

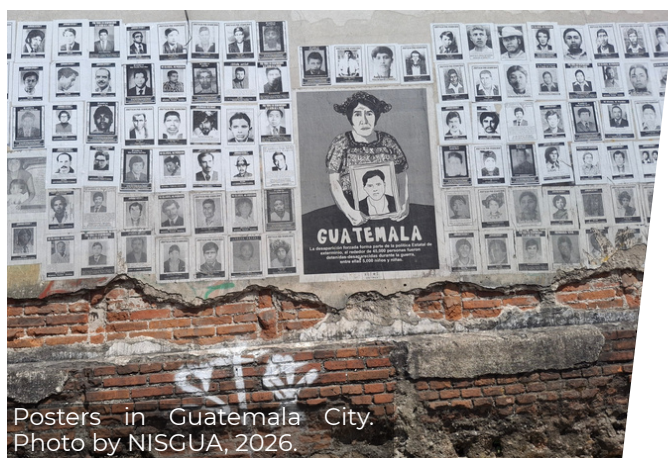
This was the first time a former head of state was tried for genocide in the courts of the country where the crimes occurred. It marked the culmination of 12 years of dedication by the AJR and its legal team, CALDH (Center for Legal Action on Human Rights). However, 10 days later, the Constitutional Court overturned the ruling and annulled the trial on legal grounds. Politically, though, it stands proven: **GENOCIDE DID OCCUR.**



Ixil Genocide Case – Lucas García

Retired General Manuel Benedicto Lucas García, former Chief of the General Staff of the Guatemalan Army (August 1981–March 1982), is tried for genocide, crimes against the duties of humanity, forced disappearance, and sexual violence. As Operational Commander of the Guatemalan Army, he identified the country's Maya peoples as enemies of the state and sought to exterminate them.

In April 2024, oral and public proceedings began, but after 99 hearings, the trial was suspended by the First Chamber of the Court of Appeals. The AJR and with its legal team from the ODHAG (Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala) are still awaiting its resumption. Meanwhile, Lucas García remained at the Military Hospital, from where he requested a change to alternative measures — a request granted in July 2026, after which he has awaited the proceedings from home.



Posters in Guatemala City.
Photo by NISGUA, 2026.



Posters at the Courthouse.
Photo by CPR-Urbana, 2015.