

Juicio Sepur Zarco

Women's Struggle for Justice

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The Sepur Zarco Community, the Military Detachment and Sexual Violence against Women

Sepur Zarco is a community located on the border separating Alta Verapaz and Izabal, provinces in Guatemala; in this region of the country about six military detachments were installed during the Internal Armed Conflict. They were located on private plantations, and each of them was designed for a specific military purpose: extermination, torture, relaxation, etc.

By August 25th, 1982, the military detachment in Sepur Zarco was completed and designed for "relaxation of the troops". This detachment was built using the labor of community people at gunpoint. During this time the army captured men from the community who belong to the Maya Q'eqchi' people and who were applying for their legal land ownership papers. Because of this they were considered insurgents, were captured and disappeared. The women that were made widows under these circumstances, were considered "available women", and they were submitted to domestic slavery, sexual violence and sexual slavery.

These abuses were committed by Guatemalan Army members during six consecutive months; women were organized in shifts every three days for cooking and washing army uniforms, being raped individually or collectively on repetitive occasions. Some of them were forcefully injected and given contraceptives to avoid pregnancies caused by the soldiers.

Sexual Violence as a Tool for Domination in the Past and in the Present

Sexual violence has been a tool supporting the patriarchal domination system and a social legitimization exists of the sexual violence against women. This crime was committed against women long before the Internal Armed Conflict, however during this period this practice was exacerbated and systematically used as a weapon of war.

According to the Commission for Historic Clarification, during the Internal Armed Conflict rape was a widespread, massive and systematic part of the counterinsurgency policy of the State. Sexual violence is a crime against humanity, a war crime and a constitutive element of genocide.

Even in the post-conflict period there exists a process of making invisible sexual violence as a crime against humanity, and there is normalization of violence against women. This is a form of socially legitimized and normalized violence that is practised in daily life, in conflict and post-conflict situations.



**Alianza
Rompiendo
el Silencio
y la
Impunidad**

