



THE GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA SHOULD GUARANTEE THE PROTECTION AND ACCESS TO THE HISTORIC ARCHIVE OF THE NATIONAL POLICE

Guatemala City, Washington D.C., Geneva, and San Jose, May 30, 2019. As international organizations we express our profound concern regarding the risks facing the Historic Archive of the National Police (Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, AHPN) in Guatemala, given the recent declarations of the Minister of the Interior, who announced that the terms of the agreement for the administration of the AHPN will be changed and the national and international public's access to the information will be restricted because it contains information that is "sensitive for State security."

The AHPN is a documentary patrimony of the nation that contains more than 80 million files about events recorded by the National Police since its creation in 1881 until its dissolution in 1997. It contains valuable information about detentions and disappearances during the period of the internal armed conflict; and has provided valuable information for national and international academics and social science researchers, as well as in emblematic judicial cases, such as the forced disappearance of Fernando García and Enrique Sáenz Calito, the massacre of the Spanish Embassy, and the Molina Theissen case.

Since 2009, the AHPN has been part of the documentary patrimony of the General Archive of Central America, under the safeguarding of the Ministry of Culture and Sport, and its documentary records have been public. For this reason, it seems inconceivable to us that after more than 10 years the integrity of this archive is at risk and they have proposed restricting access to victims of human rights violations, investigators, and judicial institutions based on national security issues.

International standards establish that States have the obligation to preserve historical archives and guarantee victims of human rights violations access to these documents. On multiple occasions, the Interamerican Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) has determined that the denial of access to information represents an obstacle for the establishment of truth and for judicial investigations into human rights violations; and that the State cannot hide behind national security concerns to restrict or conceal information.

Given the above, we call on the Prosecutor of Human Rights and the Guatemalan institutions of justice to guarantee the protection and preservation of the AHPN and to take the measures necessary to ensure that the right of victims of human rights violations, investigators, and the general population to access these documents and any other public information that could contribute to the establishment of truth and justice is not limited.

