

# Guatemala's Ríos Montt Genocide Conviction: Omen for US Presidents and Their Hired Assassins

By [Jay Janson](#)

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*Presiding Judge, "he knew about everything that was going on and he did not stop it, despite having the power to stop it from being carried out." US President Ronald Reagan also had the power, greater power, to stop the massacres being perpetrated by dictator General and President Ríos Montt. Instead visited him in Guatemala City and praised Rios Montt as "a man of great personal integrity and commitment. Who was more guilty?"*

José Efraín Ríos Montt began his political and military career as a young officer taking part in the bloody successful CIA-organized coup against the first democratically elected president in Guatemalan history that was ordered by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954. Two years earlier he had attended what peace activists call, the 'US School for Assassins,' namely, the long infamous School of the Americas. He ended his career a few days ago, convicted of genocide by the Guatemalan court he once controlled as president and dictator.

Associate Press reported,

'The three-judge panel essentially concluded that the massacres followed the same pattern, showing they had been planned, something that would not be possible without the approval of the military command, which Rios Montt headed. In delivering the verdict, Presiding Judge Yassmin Barrios said, "he knew about everything that was going on and he did not stop it, despite having the power to stop it from being carried out." '

US President Ronald Reagan also had the power, greater power, to stop the massacres being perpetrated by dictator General and President Ríos Montt. Reagan must have been aware of them, known enough about them, and could have stopped those year-and-half-long massacres with far less effort than President Eisenhower had made in ordering the bloody and merciless overthrowing of a popularly elected president, a democratic president, who in making land reform, had gotten in the way of the massive United Fruit Company that owned more than half of Guatemala.[1] In the case of the President of Guatemala and in President Reagan's case, there was no room for sentiment. It was just business.

Prosecutors argued that Ríos Montt oversaw the massacres of Mayan Indians when he ruled Guatemala from March 1982 to August 1983. Ríos Montt held his great power as dictator of Guatemala for the financial and political and military backing he was receiving from US President Ronald Reagan's administration, and the administrations of US presidents before him, all of whom represented the interests of the financial consensus that really rules in America.

Midway through the eighteen months of horrific massacres, December of 1982, President Ronald Reagan visited President-General Ríos Montt in Guatemala City and in a press release, praised the dictator,

*"President Ríos Montt is a man of great personal integrity and commitment....I know he wants to improve the quality of life for all Guatemalans and to promote social justice."*

These were the first years of President Ronald Reagan's administration during which CIA was organizing, funding and overseeing the sickening terrorist attacks on rural areas of nearby Nicaragua from across the border of US ally Honduras, planning sabotage of industries and mining Nicaragua's ports (which brought a US conviction by the International Court of Justice when Nicaragua sued in 1984). Reagan had let it be known he didn't approve of the popular revolution that had overthrown a brutal thieving dictator whose father had been installed by the US Marines as they were ending their twenty-one year old occupation of Nicaragua ordered by President Woodrow Wilson.[2] In El Salvador, despite evidence that by 1984, 65,000 civilians had been murdered by the National Guard and right-wing paramilitary forces, President Reagan's national Bipartisan Commission on Central America justified massive military support.

As yet, there has never been a trial in the United States of US officials and their financial backers for bribery, for CIA crimes like assassinations, promoting massacres, arranging destabilizing violence, for armed intervention or the threat of armed intervention in a foreign nation in peace time. Investigations, yes, but to this writer's knowledge never a prosecution. After a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence investigated the CIA in the 1970s, a bill was passed forbidding (future) assassinations of government officials. (American school books cite Admiral Perry's 1854 ultimatum to the Japanese government to sign a treaty of commerce or see Yokohama reduced to ashes by his flotilla's cannons, as Perry's achievement 'The Opening up of Japan' .)

Once the US is no longer omnipotent, and Americans no longer enjoy immunity as an exceptional race, their crimes against humanity will be prosecuted as was the genocide committed by Ríos Montt, a loutish butcher employed by who and what everyone knows. Everyone! If one of Al Capone's triggermen was on trial for murder, who was more importantly guilty, the triggerman, who was only one of the Mafia Don's many triggermen convicted, or Mafia don Al Capone himself?

Eventually, if not sooner, given the fact that there is no time limitation on prosecution of genocide, and the coming inevitable restitution of logic and law in public affairs, one can expect prosecution of Americans, and not just Americans in high office serving that "financial element in the circles of power that has owned the government since the days of Andrew Jackson" as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt quipped to his friend Colonel House in 1932. (One might also like to recall that at the time FDR, in confidence, noted his secondary importance to that "financial element," a tightly inclusive group of his friends and acquaintances and captains of industry and banking were, as a block, investing in the cheap labor of a financially prostrate Nazi Germany and building its Wehrmacht up to number one military force in the world in full knowledge of Hitler's plan for the Soviet Union and European Jews.)

If one confines oneself to researching the well published documentation of crimes against humanity during the administrations of the presidents that followed Franklin Delano

Roosevelt, the last American president, who, as an aristocrat, had some influence among his wealthy peers, it becomes very clear why eminent historian Prof. Noam Chomsky of M.I.T. can say over and over again, without provoking much negative outcry, "If the Nuremberg laws were applied, then every post-war American president would have been hanged." Prof. Chomsky followed this statement with listing the crimes against humanity of each of these presidents he had condemned to the gallows, and has since occasionally updated the list to include subsequent new US presidents. A hard rain is going to fall in America one day.

But the conviction of Ríos Montt portends more immediate future prosecution of similar criminally traitorous servants of the last of the white world colonial powers that have overseen massacres and slower forms of death throughout the Americas and especially in Central America and Mexico. And they are innumerable, so great is the reach of the corporatist government of the US superpower run by automaton legal thieves incapable of factoring death and misery, even deaths of children, into their mindless calculator-machine-like adherence to capital accumulation by the commodification of planet and life on Earth. (Two popular American axioms come to mind: 'Business is business' and 'good guys don't win ball games'.)

Those known for direct and immediate forms of genocide in the name of maintaining the maximum profitability of US and European predatory investments, are mentioned in encyclopedias and honest history books,

*e.g., Fulgencio Batista of Cuba, General Humberto Branco of Brazil, Raoul Cedras, Duvalier, Francois, Duvalier, Jean Claude of Haiti, Vinicio Cerezo and Ríos Montt of Guatemala, Roberto Suazo Cordova of Honduras, Alfredo Christiani of El Salvador, General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez of El Salvador, General Manuel Noriega of Panama, General Augusto Pinochet of Chile, Anastasio Somoza Sr. and Anastasio Somoza Jr. of Nicaragua, General Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, General Jorge Rafael Videla of Argentina, just to mention those who made themselves notorious by being responsible for mass murder.*

The list of thugs inflated in importance to infamous lethal monsters created by the United States and allied colonial powers in Africa and Asia is more than twice as long as the one for Latin America. For every one of these household names of horror from immediate genocide through the use of military or paramilitary, there are dozens of local presidents in the nations that make up the non-white majority mankind, that have arisen from the comprador class or military. They have represented their own people only nominally, while enforcing the infinitely broader in victims slow genocide of starvation and years of life lost from early death through malnutrition, treatable deceases, infant mortality and the mortality within all age groups, that results from populations having lost control natural resources needed to sustain life. The lands, natural resources and human resources of this majority of Mankind have for centuries belonged to the plundering speculating investors of the First World, by internationally recognized 'colonial law' enforced by firepower.

Because the convictions of Presidents and Generals Ríos Montt, Pinochet, and Videla impact Latin Americans more, we can focus on how these convictions will spread consciousness of the slow genocide caused by the parasitical economic hegemony of the US over the nearly six hundred million human beings living south of the US-Mexican border. Mexico and Haiti, perhaps for proximity to the Yankee trader in lives of human beings, have suffered far and away the most from a merciless economic subjugation of their populations by the world's single superpower.

The most recent tragic and enormous loss of life in Haiti, a slow genocide, was recently officially apologized for by ex-President Bill Clinton claiming he meant well in turning Haiti over to agro-exploitation by the US business world. As U.N. special envoy to Haiti – he publicly apologized for championing policies that destroyed Haiti's rice production. Clinton in the mid-1990s had 'encouraged' (read 'forced') the impoverished country to dramatically cut tariffs on imported U.S. rice. "It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked. It was a mistake," Clinton told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 10. "I had to live everyday with the consequences of the loss of capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti to feed those people because of what I did; nobody else."

Mexicans suffered the third massive crime of the United States in history: invasion and appropriation of half of its country at the point of guns and cannons. And since then Mexicans have witnessed the remaining half of their country occupied and exploited by the American world of business, with the cooperation of Mexico's wealthy and managed elections. (The first being the enslavement and murder of Africans, the second, the murderous subjugation and theft of the lands of the Native nations of America.)

Quoting from a study made by a distinguished Mexican writer and journalist, Gustavo Esteva:

"For some time now the social fabric and soul of Mexico has been torn away. One third of Mexicans are actually living outside of the country –one of the greatest migrations in history. Since the signing of the NAFTA agreement, 20 million Mexican citizens have emigrated, the majority of them, to the United States and Canada, but some to countries as distant as Japan. Most of them are trying to escape from unbearable conditions in their place of origin or to support their families and communities from abroad. (The amount of remittances to Mexico, 22 billion dollars per year, is the second most important source of foreign income for Mexico, after oil).

Mexico no longer operates under a state of law. The violation of human rights, especially rights of some fifty ethnic groups, is a constant. There is also continual persecution of human rights activists, environmentalists, journalists, and particularly, those struggling for social change. There is a regression of democracy, a structural "deviation of power," and the co-optation of the law by distinct corporatist factions. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights defined this as "the use of the powers of the State to persecute and hinder the civil rights of the people." ... According to Amnesty International, the torture practiced by Mexican security forces is a "generalized and systematic" practice that in recent years has "reached scandalous levels." Impunity for these sadistic acts of violence, or human rights violations is practically absolute.

More than 60 million Mexicans (of 115 million total) are living below the poverty line. 50 million live with food insecurity, 12 million can't afford basic or essential foods, 28 million are suffering from hunger, and 3 million face famine. [statistics from documentation gathered by the People's Permanent Tribunal]

Policies that interfere the internal production of corn deteriorate the economy directly in the indigenous communities, and can be seen as one of the main factors determining migration. The attack on ancestral peasant farming systems, introduction of genetically altered variants and privatization of commons so crucial to native seeds devastates rural life and weakens communities. For the invasion of peasant and indigenous territory for mega projects, mining operations, privatization of water, monoculture plantations, deforestation, and the expropriation of territory via programs for the

mercantilization of nature, agro-ecological balance is lost;

The government through dispossession is trying to “clear” people off their communal lands, already given in 50-years concessions to private corporations. These lands occupy more than 30% of Mexico. The owners of the lands, mainly indigenous people are resisting. The Zapatistas poetically embody this resistance.

The pace of environmental destruction is unprecedented. Corrupt deregulation initiatives and massive land concessions handed over to private interests have greatly accelerated the environmental devastation, which in some cases, has resulted in irreversible damage. The air, water, soil/sub-soil, forests, beaches, rivers, lakes, and oceans, all have been subject to rape and degradation through the commodification of nature by corporations.

In short, since the 1990's, Mexico has adopted, in a systemic and institutionalized way, policies and strategies that have produced a progressive decline in the living conditions of the Mexican people and in their possibility to access legal protection when their rights are violated. The government alienates its citizens and marginalizes the rights of the people in the name of macro-economic stability and in order to serve corporate or private interests in larger part those of American speculative investment banking.”

Convictions like that of Ríos Montt will help unmask the Washington-Wall Street domination of elections and hold over unscrupulous politicians not only to the degree of mass homicide, but a slower and greater genocide in Mexico and the many nations to its South.

Good people in general and activists in particular throughout the hemisphere recognize the economic occupation and terrorism by Uncle Sam and are calling for its prosecution as a crime against humanity. Cuba fought for, and got its freedom from economic occupation and slow genocide. Today Cubans enjoy a longevity even a bit higher than that in the US and a lower infant mortality rate than in US.

Americans of good conscience must condemn their nations economic occupation and economic terror in neighboring Mexico and elsewhere.

Forty-seven years ago Martin Luther King Jr. cried out,

“Look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the country. This is a role our nation has taken, ... refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that comes from the immense profits of overseas investments. This is not just.” ... The greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is my own government.”

King said “purveyor” not cause, for he held America, Americans, in anguish including himself, responsible, because the American people are capable of making their economic and military criminal aggression no longer acceptable and inoperable through non-participation, non-support, non-acquiescence and conscientious objection.

*Jay Janson, coordinator of the [King Condemned US Wars International Awareness Campaign](#) and web historian for the entirely educational [Prosecute US Crimes Against Humanity Now Campaign](#), which features the pertinent laws, exhortations by Einstein, King and others, and a country by country history of US crimes and asks nothing at all from its*

viewers. <http://prosecuteuscrimesagainsthumanitynow.blogspot.com/>

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