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## Canadian Involvement

Canada has had a presence in Guatemala for years.

**Canadian Companies** Canadian investment in Guatemala has not benefited the people, as in the case of INCO, a nickel company, where many people and natural resources were misused.

**Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations** Several NGO's cancelled their programs in Guatemala when they discovered that the Canadian Embassy staff were required to share information (e.g. project details—including project leaders) with the military governments. They felt that sharing this information endangered the lives of the people.

**Canadian Aid** Canada *cut off* bilateral aid in 1981 co-sponsoring the United Nations resolution condemning the human rights violations in Guatemala.

**Canadian Embassy** Canada has an embassy in Guatemala. In 1981 when bilateral aid to the country was cut off, the embassy remained although embassy staff have been threatened.

### We Must Ensure That Canada Does Not Resume Bilateral Aid Until There Are Significant Changes To Guatemala:

- Systematic human rights offenses must be ended and the fate of the disappeared clarified, thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to trial.
  - There must be freedom to organize and to work, especially for human rights organizations.
  - The structures of military control in all areas of civilian life must be dismantled.
  - Fundamental reforms must be undertaken to move Guatemalan society in the direction of justice in the distribution of land, wealth, income and tax burdens.
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## Be A Part Of This Important Campaign

- Your church, union, organization, conferences and/or groups could discuss passing a resolution stating that *Canada should not resume bilateral aid to Guatemala*.
  - As an alternative, suggest that aid be increased for refugee programmes in Mexico and Canada.
  - Write, and encourage others to write, your members of Parliament and External Affairs expressing the same.
  - Organize and/or attend monthly vigils in support of the Guatemalan people.
  - Monitor the media for stories on Guatemala and challenge those you think may not be covering the full picture.
  - Inform your local media of what you know and ask for coverage of the situation.
  - Distribute this brochure and related information in your network or community.
  - Become an active participant in this ongoing campaign with your ideas, skills, energy and financial contribution.
  - Inform us of your action and send our office duplicates of your resolutions and letters.
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### Who Are We?

Over the past decade many Christians in B.C. have joined together to form the **Christian Task Force on Central America (B.C.)**. Focussing on the goals of *Education*, *Action* and *Involvement*, we have come together to work for social justice and peace.

To inform us of your actions and for more information please contact us:

**Christian Task Force on Central America (B.C.)**  
P.O. Box 34306 Station D  
Vancouver, B.C.  
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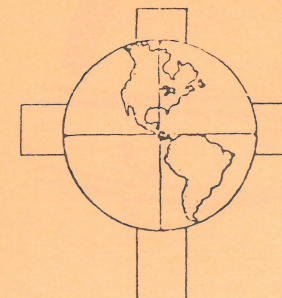
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# GUATEMALA

## What Canadians Must Know



"No one can live on what they are now paid. A few people live too well, in great opulence, while the majority live very poorly. This is not Christian. It is not just."

—Excerpts from an interview with  
Guatemalan Bishop P. Penados,  
Fall 1985.

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## How Would You Feel If . . .

. . . your child, spouse or friend was taken by night by unidentified men. You hear nothing for months. All attempts to find them are stifled by the authorities?

. . . you must begin carrying special identification. You must show it to any authority who requests. You must gain permission to leave your town even to visit nearby family?

. . . your life is threatened after holding a meeting with your congregation or union local.

### These Are Daily Realities for Guatemalans.

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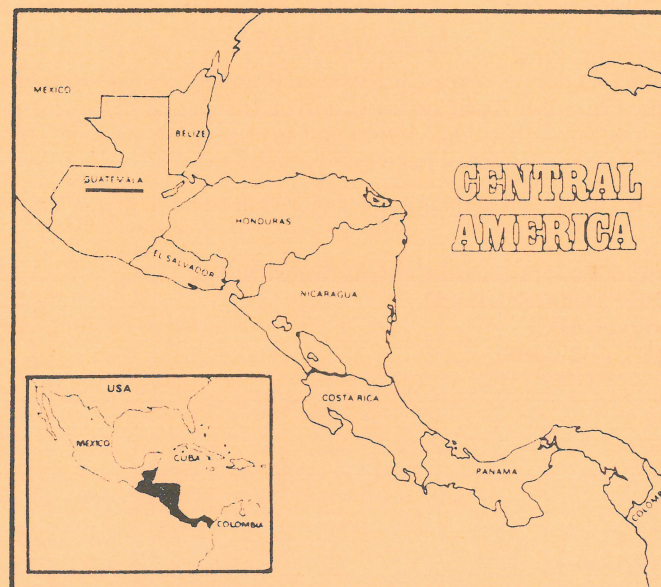
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## Facts About Guatemala

- Guatemala is a Central American country bordering Mexico to the south as well as Belize, El Salvador and Honduras.
- 7.5 million people live in Guatemala, 60% of them Mayan Indians from more than 20 language groups.
- 2% of the population owns 72% of the land.
- 9 out of 10 people live on plots of land too small to provide income sufficient to meet basic needs.
- The illiteracy rate is 62%.
- 35,000 children die of malnutrition each year.
- Hunger-related diseases kill half of the children before they reach 5 years of age.
- 60% of the National Budget goes to the military.

#### *As a result of the oppressive violence:*

- 50,000 people have been killed since 1979.
- 1,000,000 have been displaced from their homes.
- 35,000 people have been detained/disappeared.
- 200,000 are refugees who have fled the country in fear for their lives.



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## Chronicle Of Domination And Exploitation

Since the Spanish conquests of the 1500's an elite group has controlled the country economically, politically and militarily, silencing the protests of the indigenous and ladino people (Spanish and Indian descent) with violent repression.

In 1954 the C.I.A. (Central Intelligence Agency of the United States) sponsored a military coup, terminating a 10 year period of reform-minded governments. Successive military governments have consolidated their control over the country and entrenched themselves in every aspect of the country, including the ownership of banks, ranches and over 40 public companies.

Resistance to military control has grown throughout the last 30 years. Since 1954 more than 90,000 Guatemalans have been killed or disappeared for political reasons. This includes union leaders, church workers, formal opposition leaders and any who have spoken out publicly in opposition to the military control. As well, thousands of indigenous peasants have been massacred in sweeping counter-insurgency campaigns.

The Guatemalan army announced that the "democratic opening," including the recent elections, is a fundamental element of the **Third Phase** of their counterinsurgency program whose goal is to put an end to all forms of resistance and rebellion by the Guatemalan people.

The **First Stage** of the counterinsurgency program resulted in the brutal massacre of tens of thousands of people and the burning of hundreds of villages and crops, while the **Second Stage** brought about the corralling of the survivors into model villages and development poles considered by various prestigious human rights organizations to be nothing less than concentration camps that provide cheap labor for export crops and the build up of military infrastructure.

According to the Guatemalan Bishops Conference, the result of this counterinsurgency campaign has been the displacement of one million Guatemalans, including 200,000 who have sought refuge outside the country.

In December 1985 elections for a return to civilian rule were organized by the military as part of the third phase of the counterinsurgency plan. This is in order to improve Guatemala's international reputation. Why? Because Guatemala needs international aid and investment to build its economy. However, it is evident the counter insurgency measures and military structures remain and this ensures continued military control. Therefore, for the people there is no hope for real change.

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