**Information Note**

**For Guatemala’s National Day to Dignify the Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict – Sunday 25February 2018**

**Rights of victims should be at the center of Guatemala’s efforts to address past abuses**

Recalling the National Day to Dignify the Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of [truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/TruthJusticeReparation/Pages/Index.aspx), Pablo de Greiff,called for firm commitment and concrete actions to ensure justice, truth and reparation for the victims of the internal armed conflict that afflicted the country from 1960 to 1996*.*

Over 200,000 people were killed, and tens of thousands became victims of enforced disappearance, torture and sexual violence during the country’s civil war. On the National day to dignify the victims in 1999, Guatemala’s Commission for Historical Clarification published its final report “Memory of Silence”, where it concluded that acts of genocide had been committed against the indigenous Maya population during this period.

Evoking that historic day, Mr. de Greiff joined his voice in honouring the dignity of the victims and survivors of the internal conflict and recalling the imperative to promote victims’ rights to truth, justice, reparation and non-recurrence.

Although progress has been made in prosecuting former high-level officials for crimes against humanity and genocide committed against the country’s indigenous population, the slow pace of proceedings, mainly caused by the systematic use of delaying tactics by the defence, has jeopardized the right to justice of victims that are already of advanced age.

Victims also continue to encounter substantial challenges in their efforts to obtain reparation and find out the truth about past abuses. Fifteen years after the creation of the National Reparations Programme, victims’ organisations still call for better accessibility, transparency and increased efficiency of this important mechanism. The lack of an adequate legal framework to address enforced disappearances constitutes another obstacle to victims’ rights.

The Special Rapporteur underscored that on this important day for victims in Guatemala, we should not forget that promoting victims’ rights is not optional, but a state obligation and an opportunity for a society as a whole. Promoting justice, providing reparations to victims and revealing the truth about past abuses not only require independent and strong judicial mechanisms but also firm political commitment complemented by concrete actions.

He further stressed that the 25th of February is not only a day of remembrance but also an important reminder that facing the past is essential to adequately respond to present-day challenges.

The current Chair-Rapporteur of the UN [Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disappearances/Pages/DisappearancesIndex.aspx),Mr. Bernard Duhaime; the Special Rapporteur on [extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Executions/Pages/SRExecutionsIndex.aspx)**,** Ms. Agnes Callamard; the [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Torture/SRTorture/Pages/SRTortureIndex.aspx)**,** Mr. Nils Melzer; and the[Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx), Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, endorse this view.