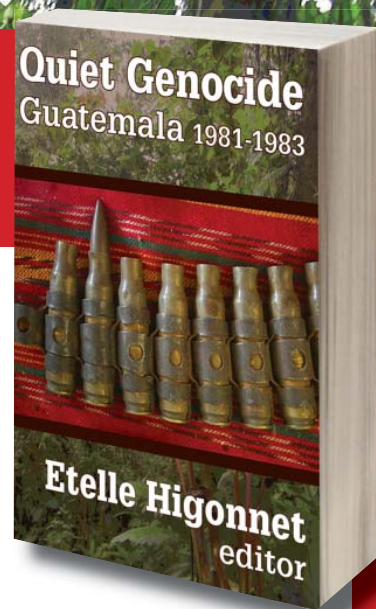


Quiet Genocide

Guatemala 1981-1983



Quiet Genocide reviews the legal and historical case that genocide occurred in Guatemala in 1981-1983. It includes the full text of the genocide section of a United Nations sponsored Commission on Historical Clarification in Guatemala (CEH), brokered by the UN. In its final report, the CEH's rigorously reviewed abuses throughout the whole country. However, the memory of the Guatemalan dirty war, which predated the genocide and continued for over a decade of the heightened killing, has rapidly faded from international awareness.

The book renders a historical picture of the 1948 Genocide Convention and its unique status in international law. It reminds readers of the difficulty of preventing and punishing genocide as illustrated by the ongoing tragedy of Darfur; and discusses the evolution of international and hybrid tribunals to prosecute genocide along with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Then, it sketches a brief history of Guatemala with a focus on genocide.

By translating the genocide argument of the CEH into English and framing it in a lively, accessible way, this volume recovers the past, sets the record straight, and promotes accountability. This exploratory effort provides insight into the world of transitional justice and truth commissions, and valuable insights about how to engage with the question of genocide in the future. These findings shed light on a crucial and dark chapter of trans-American Cold War history, and will thus be of interest not only to scholars focused on Guatemala, but also on Central America and even more broadly, on the Cold War.



Etelle Higonnet has been a researcher for Human Rights Watch, the general project coordinator and Research Fellow at the International Human Rights Law Institute at De Paul University, and has worked in war crimes tribunals in Cambodia and Sierra Leone, as well as other human rights NGOs around the world. She is a graduate of Yale Law School. The Genocide Studies Program at Yale University, of which this is a project, conducts research, seminars and conferences on comparative, interdisciplinary, and policy issues relating to the phenomenon of genocide.

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NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER, RIGOBERTA MENCHÚ TUM'S COMMENT ON GENOCIDE IN GUATEMALA.

“*The genocide of Guatemala’s Mayan people was not a simple killing, nor an unintended side-effect of war. Rather, the genocide grew out of a project to destroy a millennial culture, an entire civilization, within the framework of a counterinsurgency campaign. The project failed, but the damage it did was inestimable. In fact, 83% of all victims of atrocities were Mayan. Attacks destroyed family roles. They undermined or even shattered cultural identity through physical elimination of men, women and children, particularly older women in communities, who played the key role of oral transmission of ancient traditions. Add to all this to the inability to mourn lost loved ones and practice rituals of shared grief in peace and solidarity, the impossibility of following traditional norms that had long preserved cultural unity, and the need to adapt to harsh realities imposed by force and terror. This painful past of atrocity has been particularly destructive of notions of harmony and balance so crucial to Guatemala’s indigenous peoples. Moreover, this past is one that the Maya People of Guatemala must face and resolve in the days ahead. This is why we understand the immense value of initiatives such as this book, which broadcasts a reality that deserves to be known by the international community. This undertaking is of great value.*”



—Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Nobel Peace Prize Winner

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