

Van: Human Rights Watch <news@hrw.org>
Verzonden: vrijdag 17 mei 2013 0:33
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Onderwerp: Victims Persevere In Guatemala

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THE WEEK IN RIGHTS

May 16, 2013

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Victims Persevere In Guatemala



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Called as a witness during the trial of Efraín Ríos Montt, who ruled Guatemala in 1982-1983, Francisco Cobo described how soldiers strangled his brother and killed his mother by smashing her head with a rock. Another witness, Elena Caba, told how the military executed her younger siblings, ages four, three, and one, then killed her parents.

Ríos Montt was found guilty of genocide for his role in efforts to exterminate the Maya Ixil indigenous population. In the decision, the judge said Ríos Montt was fully aware of plans to wipe out the Ixil, which resulted in 1,771 killings, as well as rape and other atrocities.

In a country where the powerful often seem above the law, the ruling is a testament to the perseverance and bravery of victims who fought for 30 years to bring Ríos Montt to justice, and of the judges and prosecutors who held him to account.

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