

THE MAYAN JUSTICE CAMPAIGN



A CAMPAIGN OF THE VOICE OF THE
MAYAN PEOPLE AND AMOR
INTERNATIONAL

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE FOR
THE 116 CHILDREN IN CHIUL





"We Mayans haven't disappeared, we're being disappeared at gunpoint and by the weapon of terror. I don't tell my story because I am traumatised. I share my story because I still see a great cruelty in my pueblo."

Arnulfo Oxlaj is a Mayan philosopher, teacher, artist, author and activist for human rights and the Mother Earth and is also a politician and economist who graduated in London. President of the NGO AMOR International and the Ixiim Institute, he is the only surviving child among 116 children from the massacre that occurred on May 21st, 1988, in Guatemala at the hands of the army and government of the country.

ARNULFO
OXLAJ |

At the age of 10, a Swiss man helped reunite Arnulfo with his parents, who had fled to the mountains believing Arnulfo to be dead. Arnulfo first travelled to Switzerland when he was around 10 and lived between Guatemala and Europe. Yet from Europe he could still hear the cries of his people. He saw that it was necessary to collaborate with the liberation of his pueblo by means of a new thesis that was truly in harmony with the universe.

| CHIUL MASSACRE

On Saturday, 21st May, 1988, the Guatemalan army and government, led by president Vinicio Cerezo, Guatemala's first 'democratic' president, and assisted by several NATO member country armies, carried out a massacre in the village of Chiul, Cunén, in the department of Quiché, in which they kidnapped hundreds of Ajq'ijab', who historically have been for the Mayan people the philosophers or day keepers, misnamed 'Mayan priests'.

116 boys and girls from different regions were also kidnapped and taken to the military base in the village where for several hours the soldiers tortured their prisoners and raped the women.

The 116 girls and boys were also tortured and thrown into a well filled with water and the faeces of the soldiers. Several hours later, they reappeared at the mouth of the well and began urinating on the children, to cries of "Glory to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" and "Ave Maria, and they crossed themselves. Little by little the children drowned and suffocated. That day 115 boys and girls died. Only one child managed to survive. After four nights and five days in the well, he was rescued by a woman, and left with his uncle.

This surviving child is the Mayan philosopher, Arnulfo Oxlaj.

Arnulfo's father was an Ajq'ij and leader. An Ajq'ij is an astronomer, someone who connects the human being with the universe, who reads the universe and understands its depths. At that time, the guerrilleros and armed forces were already discussing the Peace Accords, with the native people included as an afterthought.

Arnulfo's father and his fellow Ajq'ijab' wanted, through dialogue, to find a path to achieve Mayan autonomy. The government, viewing their actions as a threat to their plans, used the excuse that Arnulfo's parents and their colleagues were brujos or witches/witchdoctors to perpetrate the massacre and silence them for good.

Since 2004, Arnulfo Oxlaj has been denouncing the massacre in the Public Ministry in Santiago Atitlan, but each time they 'misplace' his complaint. In 2009, Arnulfo returned to Guatemala and opened the Institute of Mayan Wisdom and Medicine in San Marcos La Laguna on Lake Atitlan, a place where many people from other countries have bought up land cheaply, driven up prices beyond the affordability of locals and closed off fishing and swimming access. Arnulfo set up a foundation, AMOR, and began to share his testimony as well as teach human rights, land defence and Mayan philosophy/wisdom in general.

However, a group of expat residents decided that he was a danger to their business interests and started persecuting him with the aim of preventing his testimony and teaching. They attacked him physically in the street, destroyed his signs daily, sent men to attack him in his home with machetes, burgled his home and stole his computers and phone and all his data, and began a public defamation campaign aimed at discrediting him and destroying his economy. Arnulfo called these people to a public meeting to find a peaceful way forward and stop the attacks, but they were determined to continue.

One evening in 2014, three judges, the public prosecutor and a court notifier from Santiago Atitlan and Sololá summoned Arnulfo to Santiago Atitlan where they demanded that he pay a bribe of half a million quetzals or face prison and be handed over to those formerly in charge of national security. Faced with these threats, he was forced to agree to pay them in instalments. Then, he remembered the well in which they had already assassinated him, and he decided to report them to the anti-corruption court in Quetzaltenango.

However, during the trial, the judge took no action against the judges and public prosecutor, and only sanctioned the notifier. However, reporting them only intensified their malice towards him, and they promised revenge. The judges joined forces with the expat group, who were aware of the massacre but also that former military heads of several NATO members were involved, countries they hailed from.

PERSECUTION AND CRIMINALISATION OF SURVIVORS

Together, their persecution of Arnulfo and his family intensified; they sent him constant death threats, set fire to his home twice, attacked him in the street with a baseball bat, attacked his elderly mother in her home and attempted to rape his family member, even making several attempts on Arnulfo's life. They started to say, "Leave, or else."

Arnulfo Oxlaj presented complaints to them regarding their own actions against him, but the Public Ministry would disappear them, just as they had repeatedly disappeared Arnulfo's complaint regarding the massacre. The judges and district attorney began to buy off all those who lived in that municipality and incite them to lynch him, but they failed to turn all the people against him but a few.

In May 2015, the judges, prosecutor and group, in conjunction with the perpetrators of the massacre, fulfilled their threat. They invented a vile case against Arnulfo in the name of

the massacre with the aim of criminalising him and preventing his testimony. Arnulfo collaborated with the investigation, but the prosecutor who had extorted him altered his testimony, and his hundreds of witnesses were threatened and forced to sign altered testimonies. Arnulfo recused the judge hearing the case, who was also one of the extortionists he had denounced.

The case was sent to be reassigned to a different court and Arnulfo was given leave to travel as he was free from any process, informed that the reassignment would take at least a year. Arnulfo had professional commitments including a speaking engagement at a philosophy conference in Canada and a short scholarship in the UK. However, no sooner had he left than they took advantage of his absence to return the case to the same corrupt court and create an illegal arrest warrant.

His life now in danger, Arnulfo was forced to seek refuge in the UK where he was granted humanitarian protection in 2017. In June 2018, Arnulfo's complaint regarding the massacre and the resulting persecution and criminalisation was finally accepted by the Human Rights Attorney General's Office and the Public Ministry in Nebaj.





As he was transferred to the court in Sololá, he was tortured again by the police guards, who threatened to dispose of his body in a ditch in a plastic bag, and the rains would wash him away. But the rains never came, only the giant red Grandmother Moon.

When he arrived at the hearing, a journalist supposedly of the people offered his lawyer a bribe to abandon Arnulfo minutes before the hearing, which he refused. After three and a half hours, the judge declared Arnulfo's innocence and that the case had been falsified. It is not that there is justice in Guatemala, only that the falsified evidence was not even sufficient for their own laws. The judge ruled a lack of merit and Arnulfo's immediate liberation as the victim of criminalisation.

"When I emerged, a pueblo awaited me, a pueblo that had called for my freedom. I thank that pueblo, my sacred pueblo. And what remains of my life belongs to them. Because I have faced and known death, and death isn't my enemy, she is my beloved."

On 28th September 2021, the planned exhumation was halted when a group of ex-military and patrollers in Chiul tried to kidnap Arnulfo. They then kidnapped a cameraman whose they offered to release only in exchange for Arnulfo Oxlaj. The cameraman was eventually freed but the Public Ministry signed a legal act promising to hand over Arnulfo to his alleged assassins.

Today, Arnulfo Oxlaj's life is in grave danger as the threats continue to escalate. Adult survivors and families of victims of the massacre are petrified to speak out for fear of their own lives. The Peace Accords were signed but the genocide continues as Guatemala hurtles towards totalitarianism and war. Human rights defenders are being murdered at an alarming rate.

Guatemala doesn't need any more martyrs.

ILLEGAL CAPTURE

On 20th May 2021, Arnulfo Oxlaj was on his way to the commemoration of the massacre carried out on 21st May 1988. Two days prior, he had held an international press conference in which he had given his testimony regarding the massacre. As he headed to the commemoration event, his car was surrounded by 30 or so police officers who called for reinforcements and heavy artillery. The police stole a large sum of cash from his suitcase, funds destined to provide Mayan children with food and medicine. They threatened him and handcuffed him so tight that his hands were turning black. (We later learned that they had received a call from high up saying that the car was stolen, and only learned of the illegal arrest warrant which had expired hours later.)

Arnulfo was taken to the court in Santiago Atitlan where he was delivered to his extortionists and kidnappers once more. During this illegal hearing, the judge ordered Arnulfo to be sent to Mazatenango prison pending trial, fulfilling the will of the kidnappers, torturers, rapists and murderers of 21st May 1988. His show trial date was set for 27th May.

During the transfer, he suffered abuse at the hands of the police, who strung him up by the handcuffs for hours on end. When he reached Mazatenango prison, where the heat was unbearable and rife with infestations, the prison guards told him they were going to rape and kill him. One inmate pushed him up against a wall and said, "Be thankful that my wife had a signal and told me about the work you do outside." He told him that they had paid people to kill Arnulfo and to stick close to him if he wanted to survive.

The prisons in Guatemala are indescribably inhumane, and Arnulfo witnessed unspeakable acts of violence. He did not eat or drink for seven days for fear of being poisoned. More people arrived offering money to the prisoners to do Arnulfo harm. At the same time, unbeknownst to Arnulfo, his pueblo, together with national and international organisations, were creating a great movement outside.

"This time, my pueblo lifted up their voice, international and national organisations spoke out on behalf of Arnulfo Oxlaj. But it was not for Arnulfo Oxlaj, it was for the pueblo."

"In the world, we don't need to continue on this path. On this path, we will create only generation after generation of cruel people. The world has great talents and gifts, be they the natives of Abya Yala or whichever continent, and we all need to use them together for peace."

HELP ARNULFO OXLAJ AND AMOR ACHIEVE JUSTICE AND A DECENT BURIAL FOR THE 115 CHILDREN IN THE WELL AND THE HUNDREDS OF MAYAN WOMEN AND MEN MASSACRED ON 21ST MAY 1988.

CALL ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS TO PROTECT ARNULFO AND THE OTHER VICTIMS OF THE MASSACRE FROM PERSECUTION.

To join the campaign and for more info, connect with us:

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#ArnulfoOxlajFilosofoMaya
#JusticeForChiul
#AMORGuatemala
#JusticiaPorChiul

[www.amorguatemala.org/
mayanjustice.html](http://www.amorguatemala.org/mayanjustice.html)