

Guatemalan Ex-Dictator Rios Montt Set to Face Genocide Re-Trial



Guatemala City, July 23 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The genocide re-trial against former Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt resumes on Thursday despite the retired general was declared mentally unfit to face trial after multiple delays.

Experts and prosecutors insisted the process should go ahead on Thursday in spite of the request from defense lawyers last week to indefinitely suspended the trial on the basis that 89-year-old Ríos Montt would be mentally incapable of comprehending the charges against him and defending himself.

"We are ready with great desire to again prove the genocide and (violation of) duties to humanity that were committed against the Ixil ethnic group," human rights lawyer Hector Reyes told *Prensa Libre*.

A special tribunal is expected to rule on Thursday on whether to accept or reject the report from the National Institute of Forensic Sciences detailing Ríos Montt's health and psychological condition with

regard to his ability to face trial. A ruling on the matter will be determined on Thursday during the court trial session, one of Rios Montt's legal representatives told EFE.

In May 2013, Rios Montt was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity for thousands of human rights abuses committed during his 1980's dictatorship, but the historic verdict and accompanying 80 year prison sentence were overturned just 10 days later, purportedly due to errors in the process. During the trial, almost 100 witnesses testified over counts of rape, infanticide and the destruction of crops to induce starvation.

Rios Montt's defense team has pursued a deliberate strategy of delays in order to prevent their client stand trial for charges of genocide once again. The re-trial was intended to begin in January, but a series of procedural setbacks and defense tactics have posed major setbacks to the process getting underway.

Rios Montt's military regime carried out a scorched earth campaign largely against the country's indigenous population and marked one of the bloodiest periods of Guatemala's 36-year civil war. The former despot is accused of killing at least 1,771 Guatemalans in the area of Ixil, committing 1,400 human rights violations, and displacing tens of thousands indigenous people.

Human rights defenders have voiced concern over the repeated postponement of the trial, stressing the urgent need for thousands of victims of civil war and genocidal violence to see justice.

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