



Imprimir artículo Exportar a PDF
Volver

Latin America: The Truth Commission: A Broken Promise

By Marcos Matías Alonso

27, november, 2010.- In past decades, numerous "Truth Commissions" were set up in various countries around the world (1). When military dictatorships came to an end and when different armed conflicts concluded in Latin America, these extrajudicial instruments emerged as alternatives in the quest for justice. Argentina was the first country to set up a commission to investigate the atrocities of the "Military Junta", and Raúl Alfonsín established the "National Commission on Disappeared Persons" when he became president.

In Mexico, Vicente Fox offered to set up a Truth Commission as part of his presidential campaign commitment in order to investigate the disappearance of persons and the systematic violation of human rights. In November 2001, the former president of Mexico only established the "Special Prosecutor's Office for Social and Political Movements of the Past" (FE) which reports to the Attorney General of Mexico. The initiative to set up the Truth Commission with the participation of the civil society was dismissed. He was afraid to face the shadow of the past and did not want to provoke the wrath of the authoritarian governments of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

In 2006, the FE completed its work with disappointing results. In its final report entitled, "Historic Report on the Mexican Society", it acknowledged that "massacres, forced disappearances, systematic torture and genocide" took place during the terms of three presidents (from 1964 to 1982). Given the dissatisfaction with the work carried out by the FE, the then Senator Saúl López Sollano proposed to the Senate plenary in September 2005 to set up the "Citizen Truth Commission in order to issue a landmark ruling on the crimes committed by the State".

Just as Vicente Fox dashed the hopes of establishing a national Truth Commission, Zeferino Torreblanca also failed to keep his word to set up a local commission in Guerrero. In June 2007, this political leader announced his interest in setting up a state commission to investigate the dramatic events in human rights violations. The massacres of "Aguas Blancas" (June 1995) and "El Charco" (June 1998) emerged as emblematic examples for which justice has been demanded over the years. Neither "Aguas Blancas" nor "El Charco" can be considered "closed cases". The ghosts of the past represented in the powerful interests of the political chieftainship undoubtedly prevented Zeferino Torreblanca from taking vigorous action. Unleashing the "wrath" of the PRI political leaders could have significant impacts, reason for which he decided to put off public demand. The wound is still open, and the detriment caused to the victims is an unfinished chapter.

In this context, it is worth acknowledging the commitment of Leonel Godoy, Governor of Michoacán, who, in October of last year, established a state Truth Commission and offered his support thereto in order to investigate the "legal truth" of the "dirty war", as well as the illegal arrests and extrajudicial executions. Human rights defenders promote a similar initiative in Oaxaca. They believe that in order to heal "social wounds", a Truth Commission must be established in order to investigate the grievances of 2006 and determine the responsibility of the "crimes of the State" committed during the government of Ulises Ruiz.

The establishment of the Truth Commission is a way to achieve justice and defend the dignity of the victims. Honoring the past means uncovering the truth. The response to the following question is quite clear: Do you want to remember or forget? We must remember what happened in order to prevent it from occurring again! Remembering is not easy, but it may be impossible to forget! The right to know and acknowledge the truth will allow us to know the causes of the violence and establish the legal liability of the parties involved. Only in this way can we prevent impunity. There is no justice if there is no penalty or application of punishment, pursuant to the national and international law in force.

Healing the wounds of the past requires repairing the damage. If an extrajudicial mechanism such as a Truth Commission contributes to building bridges in order to reconcile with and forgive the parties involved, it is worth



trying. If the mandate of the Truth Commission prevents further atrocities from recurring, then putting forth the effort is praiseworthy. If the commitment of Ángel Aguirre Rivera (2) to establish a Truth Commission to clarify hidden atrocities is sincere and honest, we welcome the political will to clarify the crimes of the past. Whether Ángel Aguirre opens the doors to justice and breaks the wall of silence will be his ultimate test.

(1) Parties interested in the topic may consult the excellent book written by Priscilla Hayner. *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Mexico, 2008.

(2) Candidate for Governor in the State of Guerrero and member of the México nos Une (Mexico Unites Us) Coalition, composed of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the Labor Party and the Partido por la Convergencia (Convergence Party).

Source: Received directly from the author Marcos Matías Alonso.

Traducción de Sylvia Fisher, para Servindi.

Tags relacionados: [Marcos Matias Alonso](#) [1]

[Truth Commission](#) [2]

Valoración: 0

Sin votos (todavía)

Source URL: <https://www.servindi.org/actualidad/32485>

Links

[1] <https://www.servindi.org/etiqueta/marcos-matias-alonso> [2] <https://www.servindi.org/etiqueta/truth-commission>