

Institutionalised Injustice

The Struggle Against Impunity

Public Event

Toronto: Tuesday, February 24, 2009. 7:00 PM, 25 Cecil St. (Steelworkers Hall)

Human Rights Defenders from COLOMBIA, GUATEMALA and MEXICO

talk about their work to stop impunity and to bring justice to those affected by human rights abusers

IMPUNITY is the lack of accountability for human rights violations. In most countries where impunity flourishes, including Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia, when agents of the state - members of the military, police and other armed forces, or even death squads tolerated by the government - commit human rights abuses, they are not punished for their actions. This lack of punishment sends a clear message to the perpetrators of such crimes that those activities are condoned by the state, and that governments agents can kill, torture or disappear without fear of being brought to justice.

Speakers:

From Colombia: Gloria Gómez, National President of ASFADDES (the Association of the Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared). Most ASFADDES' members are women who head single parent families, who have loved ones that have been disappeared over the past 30 years. The demobilisation process by the Colombian government seems to underline the systemic nature of impunity for human rights violations in the country.

From Guatemala: Jorge Lopez is the director of OASIS (Organization to Support an Integrated Sexuality to Confront AIDS), and works on the education and prevention of HIV/AIDs and the protection and rights of the LGBT community. Also speaking is Zulma who witnessed the murder of a transgender sex worker. Zulma has testified that the murderers were members of the Civil National Police. The LGBT community is extremely threatened in Guatemala, and persons are regularly the target of "social cleansing."

From Mexico: Tita Radilla, a founding member of AFADEM (the Association of the Family Members of the Detained, Disappeared, and Victims of Human Rights Violations in Mexico), is responsible for a precedent-setting victory in March 2008, when the Inter-American Court of Human Rights accepted for consideration the 1974 case of her father's disappearance. If tried by the Court, this case will be the first from Mexico's Dirty War, potentially leading to the prosecution of more cases of disappearance, and ultimately the recognition by the Mexican government of state use of systematic repression.



Peace Brigades International (PBI) is inspired by nonviolent traditions like Gandhi. When invited by human rights defenders, PBI sends teams of international volunteers to provide protective accompaniment and international presence to threatened defenders. PBI's presence increases space for defenders to work and

provides security for them because perpetrators of human rights violations don't want the world to know what they are doing.

For More information: info@pbicanada.org or visit www.pbicanada.org. Events are free. Financial contributions are gratefully accepted.

This tour is sponsored by: Inter Pares, Public Service Alliance of Canada, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario International Solidarity Committee, United Church of Canada, Primates World Relief and Development Fund, University of Ottawa Graduate Students' Association, Rights and Democracy, Steelworkers Toronto Area Council. Endorsed and supported by: Comité pour les Droits Humains en Amérique Latine