April 29, 2013

Constitutional Court Justices
Constitutional Court
Guatemala

Dear Justices:

We, the members of the American Anthropological Association Committee for Human Rights, strongly urge the Government of Guatemala to move forward with the trial of former General Efrain Rios Montt on the charge of genocide. It is imperative that the trial be completed in a thorough, fair, and transparent manner. To forego the trial flies in the face of common decency, would represent yet another assault on the victims and survivors, would run counter to international law, and would besmirch the state of justice in Guatemala.

Holding alleged perpetrators of genocide accountable is critical for both Guatemala and the global community. It sends a clear message that genocide will not be tolerated; that impunity is repugnant and will not be allowed; and that international conventions to protect human rights must be respected.

We appreciate and understand the tremendous pressure that the judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal professionals have experienced and continue to endure. We commend those who have worked so diligently to bring this case to trial and those who continue to fight for its fair and timely completion. We support the latter’s efforts and stand by them as they defend the integrity and independence of the Guatemalan judicial system and insist that Guatemala uphold its commitment to honor international law.

The evidence available to date would indicate that genocide was committed, along with countless cases of crimes against humanity, and that during that period Mr. Rios Montt had command responsibility. Be that as it may, it is only right that the trial move forward to allow the court to hear and judge the facts and to administer justice where merited. We fully support the judiciary in Guatemala in its efforts to both continue with and complete the trial in accordance with all that is fair and just, and, certainly not least, to avoid impunity.

Respectfully,

The Committee for Human Rights of the American Anthropological Association