

# *Guatemalan Court Sentences Ex-Police Chief for Murdering 37*

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Guatemala City, January 20 (RHC-teleSUR) -- A Guatemalan court found Pedro Garcia Arredondo guilty Monday of murder, attempted murder, and crimes against humanity when he murdered 37 people at the Spanish embassy in Guatemala in 1980.

Garcia Arredondo, now 69, is responsible for burning the victims of the massacre to death on January 31, 1980, the court found after four months of hearings.

The tribunal outcome confirmed the long-held suspicions in the country, that the fire was the result of a “clandestine police operation,” and that the participants “prevented the Red Cross, emergency services, and journalists from entering” the building.

The morning of the ruling, the defendant was still trying to declare his innocence, but Judge Sara Yoc Yoc deemed that it was him who gave the orders to burn down the embassy. According to her ruling, the former law enforcer “used the media to confirm the deaths of those inside the embassy.”

The security forces of the then military regime ruling the country attacked the Spanish embassy after rural workers and students occupied it in protest of the dictatorship.

Among the 37 burned to death was the Spanish Consul, Jaime Ruiz del Arbol Soler, and Vicente Menchu and Francisco Tum, the father and cousin, respectively, of 1992 Nobel Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchu, who gave the first testimony against Garcia Arredondo.

Garcia Arredondo was first arrested in 2011 over the forced disappearance of a university student, also in 1980. For that crime, he is serving three years into a 70 year sentence.

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