

# GUATEMALA

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## Ixíl Woman Returns Home

The January 20th return was the first organized and negotiated by the Permanent Commission (CCPP) which represents the refugees. The CCPP finally reached an agreement with the Guatemalan government on October 8, 1992 which determined the terms of the return, including credits for the purchase of land, exemption from military service for three years and the establishment of a Verification Council. On March 29 the Permanent Commission issued an Operative Plan for five more returns between May and August of this year of a total of 1,619 families or 8,147 individuals who will go to the Ixcán, Varillas and Nentón.

The primary obstacle to the refugees' safe and dignified resettlement is the high level of militarization in the countryside. The army maintains bases in the resettlement areas and has carried out several attacks against the neighboring Communities of Populations in Resistance (CPR). The CPR are nomad communities in remote jungle areas who have chosen not to seek refuge in Mexico despite a decade of repression.

The army considers the CPR to be supporters of the Guerrillas and wants to prevent any contact between the CPR and the returnees, who it considers subversive. Since the first return, the army has destroyed CPR villages and forced the communities across the border into Mexico. The people are then prevented from returning by mines planted along the border. In general the army has been mining the whole region to inhibit free movement of the CPR and of the returnees.

*Source: Peace Brigades International, Proceso International, Noticias de Guatemala, East Bay Sanctuary Covenant*

We are coming from Mexico. We are from the Ixcán, from Salcón. When I left the Ixcán there were some problems with the army. They burned my house, my whole house, my clothes. I was left naked.

After much sacrifice I now have a little bit of clothing. My husband died and I became a widow. My son stayed behind with the soldiers. After my husband died I was able with much sacrifice to raise my youngest son.

All my animals stayed behind. My house was burned. I cry from such pain. I will die of sorrow with such suffering. I am not content. I am crying.

But now there is a little bit of hope. Things are a little better. I thank Mexico for giving us refuge. But now I am going back to my village, where my land is, where I have my land. I am going back to live in my village, with my people, after living in the camps in Mexico.

The Mexicans charged us rent. But now I am going back to my land. In Guatemala I have my land, my village, my country. I am going to my country. We will all have to fight to rebuild our village. We have always had to fight and it will be no different now.

We left because we wanted to, and we are going back because we want to, the whole village, the whole community. The people are going back now because we didn't want to stay in Mexico. The whole community is going because we want to and we are organized.

Right now my heart is happy because I am returning to my village.

*Source: PBI*

"Right now my heart is happy because I am returning to my village"



*"We have always had to fight and it will be no different now"*

PBI Photo