

Guatemala's Constitutional Court Overturns Rios Montt's Genocide Conviction

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On May 20, Guatemala's Constitutional Court (its high court) overturned Montt's conviction. It did so by a three - two majority. Montt will return to house arrest.

"Rios Montt was found guilty on May 10 of overseeing the killings by the armed forces of at least 1,771 members of the Maya Ixil population during his 1982-83 rule. He was sentenced to 80 years in prison."

Rios Montt's conviction was hailed as a landmark for justice in the [Central American](#) nation, where as many as 250,000 people were killed in a bloody civil war lasting from 1960 to 1996.

However, the country's Constitutional Court on Monday ordered that all the proceedings be voided going back to April 19, when one of the presiding judges suspended the trial because of a dispute with another judge over who should hear it." (Times of India, May 21, 2013)

What follows is unclear. Trial proceedings weren't invalidated. The court ordered them rolled back to April 19. At that time, a brief suspension followed another judge's decision. Disarray and confusion resulted.

By April 19, the entire prosecution's case was presented. So was most for the defense. Those proceedings still stand. Everything following is invalidated.

What's next remains to be seen. A new judicial panel may be appointed. Guatemala's attorney general may appeal.

Heavy pressure preceded the high court ruling. Business interests wanted Montt's conviction overturned. Perhaps Washington did also. It supported the worst of Montt's crimes.

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