

Vance News

July 2013

Guatemala Delegation Assesses Rule-of-Law In Light of Genocide Case

The Vance Center assembled a delegation of ten business lawyers to assess the impact on Guatemala's rule-of-law and investment climate from the ongoing prosecution of former dictator **José Efraín Ríos Montt** on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity. The delegation, five U.S. and five Latin American lawyers, met in August with Guatemalan judges from the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and High Risk Tribunal, the Attorney General, Human Rights Ombudsman, a member of the defense team, as well as board members of Guatemala's business association and others.

The delegates approached the genocide prosecution as a test of Guatemala's commitment to the rule-of-law, which they explained is vital to their business clients' consideration of investing in any country. Some in Guatemala had said publicly that a genocide conviction would damage investment opportunities there, but the delegation disagreed. José Ugaz from Peru and José Antonia Urrutia from Chile recounted how holding leaders there accountable for serious abuses had helped to build strong legal systems and economies.

Based on its meetings, the delegation issued a report of observations and recommendations and a press release, which garnered considerable media coverage. Most notably, it recommended that the prosecution resume as soon as possible with enhanced safeguards for security and transparency, and a commitment to resolve the case on its merits.

The Vance Center is considering other opportunities in Guatemala and elsewhere for such international delegations of business lawyers. Earlier this year, a delegation of U.S.-Swedish lawyers assessed media freedom in Montenegro.





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The Guatemala Delegation

Fundación Pro Bono Republica Dominicana

The Vance Center wishes to highlight the outstanding work that our partner **Fundación Pro Bono República Dominicana** ("**Fundación Pro Bono**") is doing in promoting pro bono work in the Dominican Republic. Fundación Pro Bono was incorporated in 2011 to develop, organize, and manage a culture of pro bono work in the Dominican Republic. It also participates in the formulation of legislative reform initiatives and public debates that seek to improve access to justice for low-income people, communities and vulnerable groups in the Dominican Republic.



(Signature of collaboration agreement (left to right) -- Jorge Prats Abogados & Consultores; Jiménez Cruz Peña)

In its efforts to continue encouraging law firms to engage in pro bono work and promote access to justice as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives, Fundación Pro Bono recently signed collaboration agreements with the law firms **Jorge Prats Abogados & Consultores** and **Jiménez Cruz Peña**. Both law firms have also signed the **Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas** ("PBDA") and agreed to join the Advisory Board of Fundación Pro Bono. The Advisory Board is composed by private law firms in the Dominican Republic which seek to promote pro bono work as a tool for social change and as part of their ethical commitment before the legal community. As of today, fifty-one practitioners and thirteen law firms in the Dominican Republic have signed the PBDA (for a complete list of signatories of the Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas, please click [here](#).)

The Vance Center Joins the International Coalition on the Responsibility to Protect

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On September 19, 2013 the Vance Center became a member of the **International Coalition on the Responsibility to Protect** (ICRtoP). The responsibility to protect (RtoP) is a new international security and human rights norm seeking to prevent and halt genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. The ICRtoP convenes and collaborates with civil society, Member States, and regional and sub-regional organizations to strengthen



INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

normative consensus for RtoP and promote strengthened capacities to implement it.

The Vance Center's mission and programmatic work are closely aligned with the essential elements of RtoP. A recent example is the New York City Bar Association delegation to Guatemala, which the Vance Center organized (see story [here](#)). The Vance Center also is supporting efforts in Brazil to investigate human rights violations committed by the state during the country's 20-year military dictatorship, particularly through the work of the recently created National Truth Commission.

The Vance Center looks forward to working with other members of the ICRtoP to continue to further the understanding of RtoP and to strengthen capacity to prevent genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

The Vance Center Welcomes 2013 South African Legal Fellows

Two Vance Center South African Legal Fellows have started their year-long engagements at New York firms. Lefentse Bodibe, from the corporate commercial department of Fasken Martineau in Johannesburg, has joined Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, and Masechaba Bookholane from the private equity mergers and acquisitions department at Webber Wentzel in Johannesburg has joined Cleary, Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton.

The South Africa Legal Fellows Program for ten years has selected more than 40 South African lawyers from historically disadvantaged backgrounds in South Africa to be international associates at corporate law firms and legal departments in New York City. The Program alumni participate in the selection, along with the Law Society of South Africa. The alumni run a network to develop efforts within South Africa to pursue the goals of the Program. At a network organized conference in Johannesburg earlier this year, the Vance Center presented the results of a South African law firm survey of diversity, which it commissioned to support the network's efforts.

The South African Legal fellows alongside other international associates in their firms or legal



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departments pursue a full range of cross-border practice. They also often participate in their firms' diversity programs, as well as seek pro bono assignments from their firms, particularly through the Vance Center.