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MEDIA RELEASE

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JORGE VINICIO SOSA ORANTES, CANADIAN CITIZEN ACCUSED OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, FACES EXTRADITION HEARING TODAY

The Canadian Centre for International Justice and Lawyers Without Borders Canada call on Canada to investigate allegations of his participation in a massacre

Calgary - As a hearing begins today in Calgary to determine whether Jorge Vinicio Sosa Orantes should be extradited to the United States to face charges of immigration fraud there, the Canadian Centre for International Justice (CCIJ) and Lawyers Without Borders Canada (LWBC) renew their call on the Government of Canada to investigate allegations against the Canadian citizen for his alleged involvement in the massacre of the community of Las Dos Erres in Guatemala.

“This is someone alleged to have committed some of the most serious crimes of international concern,” said LWBC Executive Director Pascal Paradis. “Charging Mr. Sosa Orantes with U.S. immigration violations is not going to provide a sense of redress to survivors of the massacre, and extraditing him to the United States does not send a message that people who commit such atrocities will be held accountable. The more serious allegations of crimes against humanity should be investigated right here.”

On August 2, a court in Guatemala City convicted four men on grounds of murder and crimes against humanity for their participation in the Dos Erres massacre as part of a special army unit that methodically executed over 200 people in 1982. Only two young boys, one of whom is now a Canadian citizen, survived the massacre. The court sentenced three of them to 6060 years in prison and the fourth to 6066 years.

The evidence accepted by the Guatemalan court shows that Sosa Orantes was a commander in the special unit and witnesses specifically identified him as one of the officers who supervised the operation. Sosa Orantes is also under indictment in Guatemala, and the Guatemalan government has requested his extradition.

Sosa Orantes, who has Canadian, U.S. and Guatemalan citizenship, was arrested in Lethbridge, Alberta, in January 2011 based on a request from the United States, which has indicted Sosa Orantes for lying in his citizenship application. The U.S. case does not seek to hold him responsible for his alleged actions during the massacre.

According to Matt Eisenbrandt, Legal Director of CCIJ, “Other options for justice exist. Guatemala has indicted Sosa Orantes for murder and crimes against humanity and formally asked Canada for his extradition. Canada can also make use of its *Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes Act (CAHWCA)* which gives the Crown the authority to prosecute crimes against humanity committed abroad.”

“We hope that the recent convictions in Guatemala and the testimony that came to light in that historic trial will spur further accountability for the Dos Erres massacre,” said Mr. Paradis. “Given the possible constraints facing the justice system in Guatemala, the gravity of the allegations and the availability of the evidence, Canada should pursue its own investigation of Mr. Sosa Orantes and prosecute him here if the facts warrant.”

“In the context of steps taken in recent weeks by Canada to deport alleged war criminals, the Government of Canada has said that alleged war criminals should be tried in this country only in rare cases. Regardless of the debate on that position, the Sosa Orantes case is undoubtedly one of those situations in which Canada should investigate for possible charges here,” Mr. Paradis continued.

“The connections to Canada are very strong because Mr. Sosa Orantes is a Canadian citizen as is one of the only survivors of the massacre. When faced with allegations of crimes against humanity, Canada is legally obligated to submit the matter for prosecution or extradite Mr. Sosa Orantes to a country that will pursue those charges,” Mr. Eisenbrandt concluded.

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Please visit the following websites for more background information:

[Lawyers Without Borders Canada](#); [Canadian Centre for International Justice](#)