

The case for Hugo Arce: presentation

By Gabriela Arce

Thursday, July 08, 2010

Hugo Arce, was assassinated on January 23, 2008, during a period of transition between governments. He was assassinated just before he was to defend himself against charges of defamation brought by the current First Lady of Guatemala, Sandra Torres de Colom. The official verdict of suicide in the case of my father was pronounced even before the results of forensic tests had been received.

The pattern of assassinations disguised as suicides and the manipulation of crime scenes is recurrent in Guatemala. Recently the head of CICIG (Guatemala's United Nation Commission against Impunity) Carlos Castesana resigned in protest against the nomination of Conrado Reyes as Attorney General. According to Castresana, immediately after taking possession of his new post, Conrado Reyes started to change the team of employees of the Public Ministry that had been working with CICIG. The Guatemalan Times noted that "Castresana accused [Reyes] of having a history of ties to organized crime including connections with firms of lawyers that defend drug traffickers and firms of lawyers involved in illegal adoptions. Castresana explained that the nomination of Conrado Reyes was the result of a pact among lawyers who are part of organized crime, he urged President Alvaro Colom to replace Reyes. Castresana denounced a systematic campaign to discredit the work of CICIG and himself; he had also received death threats. Reyes had replaced the team investigating Alvaro Matus, who was accused of obstructing the investigation and prosecution of the Victor Rivera case. [a high profile assassination in Guatemala]." Matus was also the architect of the official "investigation" into Hugo Arce's death.

Lawyer Karen Marie Fischer Pivaral is one of Guatemala's foremost human rights attorneys with a longstanding history of taking high profile cases such as the assassination of presidential candidate Jorge Carpio in 1993. On the second anniversary of Hugo Arce's death, she wrote a powerful article in which she highlighted the absurdity of the government's conclusion of suicide in the face of the evidence. Impunity remains the hallmark of Guatemala's legal system.

Gabriela Arce is the daughter of Hugo Arce.