

gathered in the outlying regions be easily obtainable by groups within Guatemala City and by international human rights organisations in the rest of the world. It is on this foundation of an increasing willingness to be open and to work together rather than individually that the Human Rights Monitoring Network would be established.

Communications Environment

Guatemala is a developing country in which many of the outlying regions do not have telephones, where electrical supply is variable and where the main medium for mass communication is radio.

This being said, the telephone links within Guatemala City and between the capital and the other main towns are relatively reliable. There are also government hearings to establish a nationwide cell-phone network, which could mean by the end of the year even the most remote areas would be able to have a telecommunications link.

As far as high-tech communication is concerned, most of the cities have local internet servers, which allow access to the internet at the cost of a local phone call. There are also e-mail links in every urban centre, also accessible at the cost of a local call.

Some human rights organisations have computers and are technologically ready to use them extensively for the work of monitoring, networking and communication. According to Ambassador Daniel Livermore, one of the best prepared of these groups, in terms of technological sophistication, is the Centre for Legal Action on Human Rights (CALDH).

For computers, the problems with the power supply can be lessened, although not overcome, by providing voltage regulators. These come with battery back-ups to allow information to be saved before the computer switches off.

A poor power supply, as well as a poor country, means that television is not the mass-medium it is in North America. In Guatemala, radio is the vehicle for popular communication. There are commercial stations in the major cities, listened to largely by the urban poor. Across the country the main providers are community radio stations, whose reach is determined by their wattage. These are run primarily by church groups and by NGOs and their audience is the rural poor. There are plans among some human rights groups to try to use radio, through community radio stations, to communicate the message of democracy and of the development of a civil society in an easily understandable manner.

The main means of transport in the country is bus. These vehicles are often in poor repair and in need of a paint job. We propose that some of these buses be given a new paint job, but with graphic art advertising that promotes democratic values. However, there are no large, or national, bus companies; one person may own no more than one, two or three