

during the war. A loose coalition of human rights groups, The Alliance Against Impunity, has been opposing it. They are concerned that it will create loopholes which will allow past violators of human rights, particularly those involved in disappearances and killings, to go without trial.

Underlying this concern is an essential distrust of the judicial system. On the ground, the army has often effectively been an alternative to a corrupt police force. Many of the J.P.s have little legal training. The distrust of the judiciary stems from the fact that it was often a tool of the government establishment. Individuals and NGOs hold it accountable for past abuses. It is, according to ICHRLA, "discredited". There is a commitment from the government to reform the judiciary and money will be committed to that goal. But this inevitably will take a long time.

The culture of distrust also seeps into the human rights community: there is a fundamental lack of trust, a sense of territorialism and a fear about sharing information. For years human rights groups have had to be cautious and protective about their work because they were operating during a civil war in which violations, and retributions for reporting them, were commonplace. However, databases on human rights violations have been established; the two main organisations individually doing this work are The Archbishops Office on Human Rights (ODHA) and the International Centre for Human Rights (CIDH) which was working with the Science and Human Rights division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, . Supporters of both groups, nationally and internationally, have accused the other of not sharing information. But from discussions with people in Guatemala, and with such organisations as the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, it is our conclusion that the ODHA has the best track record in collection and collation of human rights information.

Most of the multifarious human rights groups are well organised within Guatemala City, but do not have a great outreach or organisational structure beyond the city. They often work in just one locality or with just one group of people; they do not have an established network to gather and disseminate human rights information nationally. ICHRLA describes the structure of Guatemalan Human Rights groups outside the capital as "insipid". Research has shown that the only body which has an effective countrywide reach is ODHA, through Roman Catholic diocesan offices.

In Guatemala there is also a sense of isolation for human rights groups, that they do not know what is happening in the international community, that they are cut off from the latest developments. The converse of this is that they are concerned that the international community is not able to easily obtain information about what is happening on the human rights front in Guatemala.

There is a hope in the country that the mistrust between human rights groups should start breaking down, as the peace takes hold. There is also an expressed desire that information