

# Activist Asks Spain to Pursue Guatemala Case

■ **Courts:** Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchu requests that 8 people, including 4 generals, be charged with genocide in 1980s killings.

From Reuters

MADRID—Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala asked a Spanish court Thursday to charge four Guatemalan generals, including former dictator Efraim Rios Montt, with genocide.

Menchu requested Spain's High Court, which secured the arrest of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in London last year, to prosecute Rios Montt and seven others for alleged involvement in a series of massacres in Guatemala in the 1980s.

The court, which has become a lightning rod for international human rights cases since Pinochet's detention, has not yet decided whether to accept the case.

"Spain has opened a window so that victims no longer have to hide their pain," Menchu said after presenting her written petition.

Judge Baltasar Garzon, who successfully sought the arrest of Pinochet, sits as an investigating magistrate on the court, but any decision on whether he personally takes on the case would be made by



Associated Press

Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchu appears before High Court in Madrid to present her petition for prosecution of eight fellow Guatemalans.

his superiors.

Menchu said she had lodged accusations against the generals—who include former dictators Fernando Romeo Lucas Garcia and Oscar Mejia Victores and former army Chief of Staff Benedicto Lucas Garcia—two colonels and two civilians.

Menchu, a Maya activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, wrote an autobiographical account of state terror during Guatemala's 35-year civil war, which ended in 1996.

Menchu made clear that she brought her case to the High Court because of Garzon's aggressive ap-

proach to international rights cases. Garzon has contended that Spanish law allows the prosecution of genocide no matter where it occurs.

In addition to Pinochet, Garzon has filed charges against Argentina's former military rulers.

Accusing the Guatemalan officials of genocide, Menchu cited the killing of her own family members, the death of 39 peasants—among them, her father—when the army stormed the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala City occupied by the group in January 1980, as well as the slayings of priests.

I, Rigoberta Menchu  
for more of her testimony