


“I Was Murdered By The President of Guatemala!”

A Fantastic Yet True Account of Modern Day, State-Sponsored Anarchy



- Yakov M. Hirschson



Guatemala is a land that suffers more violence and murder than your typical war-torn Middle Eastern country. Local residents have consistently been forced to make peace with the status quo. But when respected lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg Marzano was found dead, and a video in which he blamed the president for his murder was discovered, mass unrest and political turmoil was set off. Angry crowds, incited against the government, besieged the capital city and protested against the president and his ruling party.

Yet matters did not end there. The situation became more complicated when new information about the murder came to light and placed the entire incident in question. The picture that emerged in the end was one that would surprise everyone.



Rodrigo Rosenberg Marzano's problems began, as he told close family and friends, when he ran afoul of the powerful Guatemalan government security forces in the matter of Khalil Musa's death.

Rosenberg was an influential, well-respected lawyer and law professor – one of Guatemala's wealthy elite. His clients included some of the richest business magnates in the country. He was also a man of principle in a land of lawlessness, surely a perilous situation. Musa was a Lebanese immigrant who had arrived in Guatemala without a *quetzal* (local currency) to his name, and earned a fortune there in the coffee and fabric industries. Like Rosenberg, Musa was widely respected as an honest man. He was also one of Rosenberg's powerful clients.

Musa lived in an upper-class section of the capital, Guatemala City, and his younger daughter, Marjorie, drove him each day from the factory outside of the city to enjoy lunch at home. In recent years, the now-elderly Musa had been plagued with health problems, and he decided to enlist his daughter's help to run his business affairs.

April 14, 2009, seemed like any other Tuesday. Khalil and Marjorie set out from the factory in their luxury car. Shortly after they left, Marjorie stopped the car at a red traffic light.

Suddenly, a man appeared beside the car, inches from Khalil Musa's window. Musa didn't have more than a second to react before the stranger whipped out a gun and began firing. The man then ran to a nearby motorcycle where a getaway driver had been waiting for him, jumped onto the rear seat and was spirited away.

By the time first response units arrived, the Musas, father and daughter, were both dead. Their murders would join the ever-mounting list of Guatemalan homicides that would never be solved.

Khalil Musa had close connections with the most powerful people in Guatemala, including President Álvaro Colom Caballeros, who had worked alongside him in the textile industry before entering politics, and the

private secretary to the president, Gustavo Alejos, whose brother was the leader of Guatemala's congress. As such, the Musas' violent deaths shook the entire country.

Thousands of friends and acquaintances, including powerful businessmen and politicians, attended the funerals. The following day, business leaders held a press conference in which they pointed to the murder of the Musas as a sign of the ineffectiveness of the government in the face of organized crime and corruption. They demanded that the Guatemalan authorities begin taking steps to crack down on the lawlessness by conducting a thorough investigation of this latest incident.

Land of Violence

Rodrigo Rosenberg Marzano's parents were very wealthy and owned several successful businesses. As a child, he grew up in the lap of luxury, benefiting from the best that Guatemala had to offer its richest and most powerful residents. He was unusually intelligent and he excelled in his school work. His parents sent him to study law at Harvard and Cambridge Universities, where he graduated with honors. On his return to Guatemala, Rosenberg opened a law firm and quickly rose up the ladder of success.

Despite the prevalence and even predominance of corruption all around him, Rosenberg steadfastly maintained his principles. He deeply detested those who led lives of corruption. He represented clients at the Constitutional Court of Guatemala (akin to the US Supreme Court) and became Vice Dean of the Law School at Rafael Landívar University, a prominent Guatemalan law school. In the course of his work, he represented numerous powerful figures, including top business leaders and high government officials.

During his career, Rosenberg had faced many tragic and even barbaric events up close, but this time the violence hit home. The day of the shooting, he went to the crime scene to see the bitter truth for himself.



Guatemala City.

When he arrived, he broke down and cried bitterly. "They killed the Musas! They killed the Musas!" he repeated to himself over and over again.

Rosenberg was unable to console himself for weeks after the attack. For years he had waited and hoped for some improvement in the climate of his homeland, one of the most corrupt and murderous countries on the planet. In 2005, he spearheaded a campaign to bring back a former corrupt Guatemalan president, who had stolen millions from the public coffers while in office before escaping to Mexico, and have him stand trial. The widespread corruption and total lack of justice disturbed Rosenberg to no end.

Rosenberg warned family and friends of the Musas that their deaths would never be properly investigated because the criminal networks would see to it that all attempts to verify what had happened and who was responsible would be blocked. Even if investigators managed to discover a piece of evidence that the gangsters failed to destroy,

the blame would be laid at the foot of some scapegoat so that those who were truly responsible would remain free. And if that didn't work, the mob would threaten the judges, prosecutors and witnesses so that it would be impossible to carry out an impartial trial. The Musas were doomed to remain nothing more than a statistic in Guatemala's ongoing history of violence.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the murder rate in Guatemala rose steadily from 1999 to 2009 until it reached over two and a half times that of its troubled northern neighbor, Mexico. Almost 6,500 homicides are known to have occurred in 2009 within Guatemala's population of 14 million (that's twice the population of Massachusetts with almost 40 times the number of murders...).

Guatemala is a Central American country with a rich history. The Mayan civilization flourished there for a millennium and a half until the arrival of Spanish conquistadors early in the 16th century. Unlike most of