A nalyzing the consequences of the armed confrontation requires engaging with the multiple tragedies of this entire period: the loss of so many men, women, and children, and of their dreams and potential; the impoverishment of the country as a whole and of Mayan communities in particular; the collapse of the country’s democratic institutions; and the destruction of basic norms of life and coexistence. These issues lead to a fundamental question for the construction and consolidation of peace: what are the consequences of the conflict on society and on its people, communities, and institutions?

During the process of investigation and analysis, the CEH found itself facing the deep and far-reaching impact of the armed confrontation. Some of these issues influenced the dynamic of the CEH’s investigation. Terror created an invisible, but tangible barrier that was an obstacle for the presentation of cases and produced gaps and silences within the testimonies. The absence of thousands of displaced people that could no longer return to their communities made it difficult to fully reconstruct the complete story of what occurred. The lack of networks of social organization in many regions of the country, urban as well as rural, made it difficult to access affected communities and individuals.

The analysis of the consequences of la violencia required an expansive reading of the testimonies that went beyond documenting violations, extending towards an engagement with the human emotions of the experiences described as well as their psychosocial, cultural, political, and economic impact. This was very complex work, especially since the majority of the testimonies dealt only with the narration of death, disappearance and specific accounts of the violations suffered by the particular person.

For example, if a case involved a student leader who was arbitrarily executed, many times the person presenting the testimony did not know or did not say what had happened to the organization as a result of the loss of its leader. Or, while it was possible to document in detail a massacre in a particular Mayan community, it was difficult for those interviewed to describe in depth the impact that this event had on community life or on their culture. In general, with the passage of time and the natural mechanisms of memory, the testimonies tended
to emphasize deeply traumatizing acts over their larger impact; the horror of a concrete moment or period over future consequences…

To complement the testimonies, the CEH used a variety of other sources that it collected, placing special emphasis on interviews with key witnesses, many of whom provided useful reflections on the impact of the confrontation. The CEH also used reports from its regional field offices, documents that often included more interpretative and detailed material on the experience of communities where the research was conducted. In this way, it was possible to use a diverse collection of different documentary sources regarding these issues…

During the investigation, certain themes emerged that repeated themselves over and over: the terror and trauma left by the armed confrontation; the weakening of the country’s institutions; the destruction of the social fabric; and material losses. These represent the most common and significant consequences of the long and bloody confrontation. In addition, they present an important part of the fundamental problem in that in order for society to rebuild itself, it must not only address the structural problems that led to the confrontation as well as material and political questions, it must also engage moral and spiritual issues. In addition, it is clear that in the middle of the destruction and chaos that took place, in spite of everything, significant efforts were made toward regeneration and rebuilding. Through these ongoing struggles, especially on the part of those most affected, there has been a reaffirmation of life, dignity, identity, and solidarity…

**Terror**

The thousands of dead, disappeared, tortured, and displaced, and the hundreds of Mayan communities erased from the map during the armed confrontation, have left a lasting imprint on the minds and hearts of the Guatemalan people. The impact of *la violencia* varies by ethnicity, social origins, economic position, gender, age, place of residence, political affiliation, and religious beliefs…and includes fear, terror, sadness, depression, physical and psychosomatic illnesses, altered mourning, distrust, silence, inhibition, and powerlessness. Other consequences frequently described by those the interviewed by the CEH include alcoholism, recurring nightmares, serious mental illnesses, apathy, suicides, and feelings of anger and loneliness…

Terror in Guatemala was bound to strategies whose greatest impact is associated with the periods of maximum violence and the places where the repression was most severe. However, one cannot reduce terror to a succession of violent incidents or military operations, nor were these actions the only means used to create and maintain terror during the armed confrontation. Rather, terror is a complex process created through its multiple expressions and broad social impact. For this reason, terror did not simply disappear when the levels of violence were reduced. Its effects were cumulative and lasting so that addressing terror requires time, effort, and new types of experiences that allow those affected to overcome the past…