

Guatemala in grip of 'mafia coalition', says United Nations CICIG (International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala)

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- This is what Guatemalan human rights defenders and international organizations (like Rights Action) have been denouncing for years;
- This is the regime that the U.S. & Canadian governments, global companies & investors, the World Bank and IMF have been legitimizing, empowering and enabling;
- This is the regime that the US & Canada calls a “democratic allie” in the Lima Group that is working to illegally bring about regime change in Venezuela; and
- This is a major reason why 10s of thousands – and recently 100s of thousands of Guatemalans have been fleeing their homes and countries, year after year.

Guatemala in grip of 'mafia coalition'

Associated Press, Wed 28 Aug 2019

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/28/guatemala-corruption-mafia-coalition-jimmy-morales>



Jimmy Morales accused the body of overreaching its authority last year, after CICIG (International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala) brought investigations against him, some of his relatives and his inner circle.

Photograph: Reuters

A UN commission that spent the last 12 years investigating [war crimes, organized crime and corruption] in [Guatemala](#) has described the country as “captured” by corruption in its final report, days before it is set to wrap up operations after President Jimmy Morales refused to renew its mandate.

The commission, known as CICIG for its initials in Spanish, said in its final report that there is a “mafia coalition” among members of government, the business community and private individuals that is “willing to sacrifice Guatemala’s present and future to guarantee impunity and preserve the status quo”.

The commission chief Iván Velásquez, a Colombian lawyer who has been [barred by Morales’ government from entering Guatemala](#), said via video conference from Colombia that the report would

be the commission's last public act. "We almost got to the nucleus of the structures that have captured the state," Velásquez said. "This cannot be solved without a profound restructuring of the state."

The commission began its work in Guatemala in 2007 at the request of then-president Óscar Berger and was given responsibility for dismantling illegality in the wake of the country's 1960-1996 civil war.

Morales accused the body of overreaching its authority last year, after CICIG brought investigations against him, some of his relatives and his inner circle. He was protected from prosecution as a sitting president and has denied wrongdoing.

While many observers praised the commission for its work, which resulted in the prosecution of more than 400 people, [including the former president Otto Pérez Molina](#), his vice-president and much of his cabinet, Morales decided that CICIG had run its course, setting up its impending departure on 3 September. Critics saw Morales' refusal to renew the commission's mandate as an attempt to protect himself and those close to him.

The report said the "impunity of power" in Guatemala dates to colonial times.

Guatemala elections show corruption rampant four years after uprising toppled president
One of the reasons why corruption networks persist today, CICIG said, is that "they have distorted democratic institutionality in their favor and they have molded the political system and designed mechanisms that allow them to occupy positions of power, manipulating legislation."

"Between 2012 and 2015, an illicit, political-economic network took over the executive (branch), subordinated the legislative, manipulated and interfered in the election of judges to high courts and, in addition to looting the state, promoted laws and policies favoring private companies to the detriment of competition and the citizenry," the report continued.

All that benefited drug trafficking networks, it added.

Together with Guatemalan prosecutors, the commission took down 70 organized crime networks. Those targeted for prosecution have included public officials, lawmakers, judges, businesspeople and other civilians.

It also investigated Morales' National Convergence Front for alleged illegal political financing. The report said illicit political money is "present in the majority of campaigns and parties" and comes from criminal organizations including drug traffickers seeking territorial control and political protection, as well as businesspeople seeking influence.

Rights Action (U.S. & Canada)

Since 1995, Rights Action funds human rights, environment and territory defense struggles and projects in Guatemala and Honduras; funds victims of repression and human rights violations, health harms and natural disasters; works to hold accountable the U.S. and Canadian governments, multi-national companies, investors and banks (World Bank, etc.) that help cause and profit from repression and human rights violations, environmental harms and forced evictions, corruption and impunity in Honduras and Guatemala.

Why are 100s of thousands of Hondurans & Guatemalans fleeing this year alone?

The U.S., Canada and “international community” are helping keep in place the very conditions that force Hondurans and Guatemalans to flee their countries, every year.

Impunity for U.S. & Canadian policies

The U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank and global businesses and investors (hydro-electric dams, mining, African palm, sugar cane and fruit production, garment “sweatshop” factors, tourism, etc.) maintain profitable relations with anti-democratic, corrupt, repressive governments in Honduras and Guatemala, participating in or benefitting from exploitation and repression, environmental harms and human rights violations, corruption and impunity.

There is no political or legal oversight or accountability in the U.S. and Canada for our complicity in Guatemala and Honduras’ nightmare.

Get Informed / Get Involved

- Speakers: Invite us to give presentations about these inter-connected issues and struggles
- Delegations: Join human rights educational trips to [Guatemala and Honduras](#)
- Daily news: www.democracynow.org; www.theintercept.com; www.telesurtv.net/english; www.therealnews.com; www.theguardian.com/us-news; www.rabble.ca;

Act – Stir up the pot – Chip away

Call, write, act - stir up the pot. Keep sending copies of Rights Action information (and that of other solidarity groups/ NGOs) to family, friends and networks, politicians and media – always asking the question as to why our governments, companies and investment firms benefit from and turn a blind eye to poverty, repression and violence, environmental and health harms that caused the forced migrancy / refugee crisis in Guatemala and Honduras.

U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>

U.S. House: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Canadian Parliament: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>

Other solidarity/ NGO groups in U.S. and Canada

Honduras Solidarity Network: www.hondurassolidarity.org;

Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective: www.solidaritycollective.org;

School of Americas Watch: www.soaw.org;

Common Frontiers Canada: www.commonfrontiers.ca;

Breaking the Silence: www.breakingthesilenceblog.com;

NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with People of Guatemala): www.nisgua.org;

Mining Watch Canada: www.miningwatch.ca;

CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with People of El Salvador): www.cispes.org;

Alliance for Global Justice: www.afgj.org;

CODEPINK: www.codepink.org;

GHRC (Guatemalan Human Rights Commission): www.ghrc-usa.org;

Mining Injustice Solidarity Network: <https://mininginjustice.org>;

Mining Justice Alliance: <https://miningjusticealliance.wordpress.com>;

Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor: <https://simcoecountyhondurasrightsmonitor.wordpress.com>;

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