

**Guatemalans demand arrest of outgoing president for corruption
Jimmy Morales' immunity will lapse for just a few hours on Tuesday before he's
sworn into Central American Parliament.**

by Sandra Cuffe, AlJazeera news, Jan.14, 2020

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/guatemalans-demand-arrest-outgoing-president-corruption-200114001457754.html>

Changing of military-backed regimes in Guatemala

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/changing-of-military-backed-regimes-in-guatemala>

Today marks exit of corrupt, repressive, open-for-global-business President Jimmy Morales and entry of corrupt, repressive, open-for-global-business President Alejandro Giammattei. The U.S., Canada, Spain, World Bank and multiple global corporations and investors applaud Guatemalan "democracy", vow continuing military, political and economic relations.

Guatemala City - Guatemalan civil society groups are pressuring authorities to arrest President Jimmy Morales for [corruption](#) on Tuesday as soon as his successor takes office. For more than half of his four-year term, Morales has been plagued by allegations of illegal campaign financing. He has denied any wrongdoing. He also shut down an international commission leading investigations into high-level corruption.

"Corruption kills," Guatemala City resident Cristina Valenzuela told Al Jazeera on Monday outside the prosecutors' office. "What we are demanding is an arrest warrant for [Morales]," she said, dressed up as 'the Virgin of the Struggle,' an icon of the anti-corruption movement last year.

As president, Morales has immunity from prosecution. It will lapse on Tuesday afternoon when president-elect Alejandro Giammattei is inaugurated, but Morales will likely regain immunity just hours later when he is expected to be sworn into the Central American Parliament (Parlacen), a multilateral body for regional cooperation grew out of a 1980s peace process.

Anti-corruption, human rights and social movement group members gathered on Monday outside the Office of the Public Prosecutor to call on the attorney general to file for an arrest warrant for Morales. It would have to be executed in the narrow window when he will lack immunity. "It would have to be very expeditious," Edie Cux, lawyer and president of Accion Ciudadana, a citizen action group, told Al Jazeera.



Dressed as 'the Virgin of the Struggle', Cristina Valenzuela calls for Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales' arrest for corruption [Sandra Cuffe/Al Jazeera]

Morales and other outgoing officials have been publicly linked to investigations. Significant evidence, including admissions in court by Morales campaign financiers of unregistered donations, is already part of the public record, he noted. "There is no excuse for the attorney general not to act," said Cux.

After holding a news conference, Cux and seven other civil society and social movement group representatives entered the Office of the Public Prosecutor to formally present their letter requesting immediate action, waiting for notification of the official receipt of the document.

To their surprise, Attorney General Consuelo Porras welcomed the delegation and spoke with them at length.

Investigations into outgoing officials on the brink of losing immunity from prosecution have been advancing, Porras told the group. Not all cases will meet the threshold to pursue prosecution, but there will be important relevant developments in the coming days, she said.

Morales and Vice President Jafeth Cabrera were originally scheduled to be sworn in to the Central American Parliament on Thursday, but the timetable was suddenly moved up this week.

Central American Parliament representatives are elected, but former presidents and vice presidents have automatic entry upon request. Few do so, as many politicians in the region have criticised the institution as ineffective and some have called for its abolition. Morales and Giammattei have called for Parlacen reform.

Others face possible charges

Mayors and legislators who were not re-elected, as well as Morales administration officials will also lose their immunity from prosecution on Tuesday. More than a dozen outgoing congressional representatives face allegations of corruption and other crimes.

Outgoing officials are implicated in cases under investigation by various special prosecution units, including those targeting corruption, impunity, and electoral crime. It is up to special prosecution units to decide what actions to take in their continuing investigations, Office of the Public Prosecutor spokeswoman Julia Barreda told Al Jazeera in response to a request for comment about calls for an arrest warrant for Morales.

Most of the investigations into high-level political corruption stem from investigations spearheaded by the UN-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, CICIG, created in 2007. The commission exposed networks of corruption, some of them entrenched for decades in state institutions.

CICIG investigations led to the resignation and arrest in 2015 of then-president Otto Perez Molina and much of his administration. With the campaign slogan "neither a thief nor corrupt", Morales won the election just weeks later but began lashing out at CICIG after he, his relatives and his party were named in connection with investigations in 2017.

In 2018, Morales announced he would not renew CICIG's mandate and later barred head commissioner Ivan Velasquez from the country, prompting

condemnation by donor countries, including the US, Canada and the European Union. The commission shut down last September.

"They were on a good path," Valenzuela said of CICIG, which consistently polled with 70 percent support, higher than any Guatemalan government institution.

"[Morales] lied to people," she said. "He was not even more of the same. He was worse."

Morales is not the only politician accused of electoral finance violations. Businesswoman and former First Lady Sandra Torres, who lost in runoff elections to Morales in 2015 and to Giammattei last year, is facing trial for illegal campaign financing in 2015. Arrested last September, she was released last week on \$100,000 bail after a judge granted her petition for house arrest.

President-elect Giammattei, a doctor and former prison systems director has criticised CICIG and has no plans to bring it back. He has pledged to create an anti-corruption commission, but it would not work with the special anti-impunity prosecutors who continue to prosecute CICIG-led cases and few details have been revealed.

Giammattei's inauguration ceremony will take place Tuesday at 2:00pm local time (20:00 GMT). At the same time, protesters calling for Morales' arrest will rally outside the Parlacen headquarters, where the outgoing president is expected to be sworn in four hours later.

Al Jazeera contacted the presidential spokesperson to confirm Morales' attendance at the presidential and Parlacen inauguration ceremonies and to request comment on calls for an arrest warrant but did not receive a response before publication.

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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>;

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