

**Corruption aggravates suffering and death caused by Hurricanes Eta & Iota in Guatemala and Honduras**

**Brazen Washington Post censorship of US role supporting these corrupt, repressive regimes**

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/corruption-aggravates-suffering-and-death-caused-by-hurricanes-eta-iota-in-guatemala-and-honduras>

- Below: **“How graft and incompetence aggravate the effects of climate change in Central America”**, by Elisabeth Malkin, Washington Post

**Censorship alert**

While Elisabeth Malkin writes correctly about corruption that is endemic in Honduras and Guatemala, Malkin notably does not report how the US (Canada and other actors in the ‘international community’) enable and make possible this endemic corruption, and the increased suffering and death, by helping keep in power repressive, corrupt regimes in Guatemala and Honduras, “democratic allies” of the US and Canada and members of Canada’s ‘Lima Group’ supporting illegal US-led efforts to overthrow the government of Venezuela.

**Brazenly misleading**

Malkin’s most egregious distortion is hidden in this warning: ““But Giammattei and Hernández would also be well-advised to remember Biden’s priority for the region when he was vice president. He explicitly tied U.S. aid to anti-corruption efforts.”

Malkin would know well that while Biden was vice president, President Obama’s administration supported and ‘legitimized’ the June 28, 2009 military coup that ousted Honduras’ last democratically elected government, ushering in the ensuing 11 years (and counting) of deeply corrupted and repressive regimes headed by the drug-trafficking National Party and the illegally elected presidencies of Porfirio Lobo and Juan Orlando Hernandez.

## How graft and incompetence aggravate the effects of climate change in Central America

by Elisabeth Malkin, November 23, 2020

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/23/how-graft-incompetence-aggravate-effects-climate-change-central-america/>

As Central America [buckled under the force of two fierce hurricanes](#) that struck within days of each other this month, the presidents of Guatemala and Honduras issued a plea. Their small countries are among the most vulnerable in the world to climate change, they said, but they are not the cause of it.

The leaders called for the quick release of [international funds](#) earmarked for developing economies to cope with the effects of climate change. Their suffering populations have no time to wait for the gears of the global bureaucracy to engage, they said.

All true, of course, but there is more to the story.

Experts say that warming oceans caused by [climate change](#) are leading to more intense storms that release more rain and move more slowly than in the past. Both Hurricanes Eta and Iota made landfall on Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast this month as Category 4 storms. Eta lingered for days, and its heavy rains caused flooding and landslides that killed scores of people. Some 100 people [are missing](#) after a waterlogged mountainside collapsed in Guatemala's central highlands, burying a remote village.

By focusing on climate change, though, the region's presidents were diverting attention from another kind of responsibility that is closer to home: their own failure of governance.

"Corruption kills," a former United States ambassador in Guatemala once told me, and nowhere is that more evident than when natural disasters strike. Decades of graft, incompetence and neglect aggravate the effects of extreme weather and cripple the response.

Two years ago, the Fuego volcano in Guatemala erupted, and the lava and burning rocks that tumbled down its slopes buried a town in their path and incinerated hundreds of its residents. Even though the Guatemalan volcanology institute issued warnings in time for a hillside golf resort to evacuate, the country's natural disaster commission lacked the manpower and experience to evacuate the doomed town. It was not even clear how many people lived there because there was no recent census.

Three years earlier, heavy rains caused the wall of a ravine to collapse, engulfing a settlement on the outskirts of Guatemala City and killing hundreds. Officials had warned for years that the neighborhood was at risk but took no action.

Corruption touches everything. It allows agribusiness, ranchers, drug traffickers or logging interests to decimate forests, weakening natural defenses against flooding and landslides. Authorities turn a blind eye to informal settlements in flood zones.

Honduras and Guatemala have limited resources to begin with: Their governments do not collect much [tax revenue](#). Decades of underinvestment in disaster preparedness and relief leave government agencies ill-equipped to cope when a natural disaster strikes. And public works are often a prime target for graft, so well-connected companies build shoddy bridges and roads that are unable to withstand a storm.

Five years ago, it looked as though public disgust would finally begin to pry open the corruption embedded in both governments.

In Guatemala, [a United Nations-backed panel of international prosecutors had peeled back layers of corruption](#) that reached all the way to the president. Months of protests led to his resignation and arrest, along with the prosecution of most of his cabinet.

At the same time, a scandal at the main public health system in Honduras involving the embezzlement of at least \$200 million led to [weekly marches](#) across the country. President Juan Orlando Hernández was forced to accept a similar international anti-corruption commission. Even though the group had fewer resources and less power, it uncovered schemes to [funnel public money](#) into political campaigns.

But political elites and their business allies fought back. The former president of Guatemala, after a protracted battle with the panel in his country, shut it down last year. Hernández, who has survived questions about campaign financing, a bitterly contested reelection and [his brother's conviction in New York for cocaine trafficking](#), ended the work of the Honduran commission after only four years at the beginning of 2020.

The Trump administration ignored the reversal, intent only on assuring that both governments signed deals aimed at stopping immigration.

Aware of how potent any mention of immigration can be in U.S. politics, Guatemala's President Alejandro Giammattei recently warned that "[hordes of Central Americans](#)" would migrate to seek better conditions if richer countries did not step up to help rebuild after the storms.

It was a warning that President-elect Joe Biden may take to heart. Last week he tweeted that he was keeping the victims of both storms in his prayers and reiterated his promise to fight climate change.

But Giammattei and Hernández would also be well-advised to remember Biden's priority for the region when he was vice president. He explicitly tied U.S. aid to anti-corruption efforts.

Unlike President Trump, Biden has made the fight against corruption one of the central points of a [\\$4 billion plan](#) for the region that is intended to attack the problems that drive people to migrate. As much as Central America's presidents may want to steer the conversation toward climate change, they may be forced to answer difficult questions about corruption.

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### **Rights Action's Hurricanes ETA & IOTA relief fund**

It is always the case that it is the very communities most harmed and damaged by "natural disasters" that are the most capable and in the best position to receive funds directly and immediately carry out most aspects of emergency response work.

As Rights Action has done many times since 1995, we are sending emergency funds directly to long-term community partner groups in these regions – people who are also leading land, human rights and environmental defense struggles.

Funds are used to immediately provide: food and potable water, clothing, minimal shelter, and medical support for victims of Hurricanes ETA & IOTA ..., ... before the inevitable re-building work begins, once again.

### **Groups funded to date**

Rights Action is sending emergency funds - via Money Gram, Western Union, bank transfer - directly to long term community partner groups in the ETA & IOTA devastated regions.

### **Honduras**

- Tegucigalpa - Honduras Solidarity Network supporting ETA devastated communities;
- Western Honduras – human rights defenders trucking support to Mayan Chorti communities in Copan Ruinas region;
- Western Honduras - Lenca descendant land, rights and environmental defenders, trucking support to communities in northern Honduras;
- Caribbean coast of Honduras – OFRANEH (Garifuna land, rights, environmental defenders) supporting Garifuna communities;
- San Pedro Sula region, Honduras – CODEMUH (maquiladora sweatshop workers' rights organization) supporting local communities;
- Progreso, northern Honduras – human rights defenders supporting local communities;

### **Guatemala**

- Alta Verapaz, Guatemala – CCDA (Campesino Committee of the Highlands) supporting Mayan Q'eqchi' communities;
- El Estor, eastern Guatemala - Maya Q'eqchi' land, rights, environmental defenders supporting local communities;
- Alta Verapaz, San Cristobal Verapaz – CECEP (Centro Comunitario Educativo Pokomchi) supporting Mayan Pokomchi communities;
- Guatemala City – buying corn and basic food supplies from small producers, to distribute directly to ETA devastated communities;

## **Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)**

Make check to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
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