

## Guatemala Election Watch #30

### **Propaganda film attacks NGOs, Catholic Church and land defenders in Guatemala, insinuating links to drug trafficking cartels**

by Grahame Russell, Rights Action

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/propaganda-film-attacks>

A well-financed, slick propaganda film -“Dangerous Relationships: The Misery Cartel”- has been released in Guatemala in the middle of protracted illegal efforts by the oligarchic elites to block the country’s return to actual democracy for the first time in 70 years.

The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter post from the account República (@republicagt). The post includes a video player for a film titled "Relaciones Peligrosas: El Cártel de la Miseria". The video player interface shows a progress bar at 47:02 / 47:10 and various control icons. The video thumbnail features the text "UN DOCUMENTAL DE naranja media" and a logo consisting of a circle with dots. Below the video player, the text "Relaciones Peligrosas: El Cártel de la Miseria" is visible. The post also includes a link to "Visualícelo completo aquí" and a "Translate post" option. The video player has a "Visit bit.ly" button in the top left corner. The tweet is dated 3:55 PM · Sep 20, 2023 and has 200.5K Views.

- **View film:** <https://twitter.com/republicagt/status/1704585011339444585>
- 47 minutes (spanish, w/english sub-titles), released Sept.20, 2023, <https://republica.gt/>, @republicagt, [info@republica.gt](mailto:info@republica.gt)

Here, I summarize what I find are some of the most egregious manipulations of a film that will serve to inflame social divisions and anger, and possibly engender more violence and repression.

### **“Root causes”**

Utterly misrepresenting the root causes of Guatemala’s systemic poverty and exploitation, repression, violence and crime, corruption and impunity, the film shines a positive spin on the oligarchic elites, their international business partners and the mining/agro-industrial “development” model.

Moreover, it absolves current and previous governments of much of their involvement in and responsibilities for many of the ills of the country and suffering of its majority population.

Guatemala’s systemic ills, the film sets out, are caused variously by the interests of national and international NGOs with hidden ideological and financial agendas, of former armed guerrilla fighters, of sectors of the Catholic Church, and of organized crime and drug traffickers!

National NGOs denounced include Madre Selva, ODHA, CALAS, CUC, CODECA, CONIC, UVOC and CCDA. International NGOs include OXFAM, WOLA and PBI.

“Subversive activities” is how the film insidiously and quite dangerously refers to some of the work of NGOs and sectors of the Catholic Church – language used by U.S.-backed military regimes during decades of State repression, scorched earth massacres and genocides against the civilian, majority Mayan population of the country.

### **Links to organized crime and drug-trafficking**

As if blaming sectors of the Catholic Church and NGOs for most of Guatemala’s ills was not bad enough, the film maliciously, and quite dangerously again, links some of their activities – and numerous land and territory defense struggles of impoverished campesinos - with the interests and actions of organized crime, particularly those of drug traffickers.

### **Government is “absent”**

Though all this, the film explains how the government and State and institutions (police and military, ministries of health, education, the environment, etc.) are, for reasons unexplained, absent from many regions of the country, or - in some cases - simply not capable of addressing the enormity of ills caused by the power, wealth and influence of the NGOs, sectors of the Catholic Church and organized crime, including drug traffickers.

### **Mining & agro-industry to the rescue**

After explaining which sectors are responsible for the ills of the country, the film explains that pretty much the only sector of society trying to help the majority poor are agro-industrial African palm and sugar cane producers and the mining industry. Mining companies mentioned

include Canada's Pan American Silver (Mineras San Rafael), Bluestone Resources (Cerro Blanco Mining Company), and Volcanic Gold Mines / Radius Gold (Minerales Sierra Pacifico).

Assuredly the filmmakers would claim that TESTIMONIO-Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala is full of lies and manipulations. *TESTIMONIO* summarizes repression, human rights violations, environmental and health harms, corruption and impunity in and around four global mining operations, including that of Pan American Silver (formerly Tahoe Resources) and a mine owned previously by Radius Gold.

### **Electoral coup d-etat in progress**

It is hard not to conclude that this film has been released now at the very same time that the traditional economic, political and military elites (known as the 'covenant of the corrupt') are involved in protracted, transparent and illegal efforts to block and/or outright steal the August 20, 2023 elections and prevent the Semilla Party from assuming the Presidency and government on January 14, 2024.

Manipulative and deceptive to the core, the film can only serve to further divide the Guatemalan population, and possibly foment more violence and repression against impoverished communities involved in land defense struggle, NGOs and sectors of the Catholic Church.

I believe the film highlights the intensity of efforts of the 'covenant of the corrupt' elites to resist any changes to Guatemala's historically exploitative, unequal, repressive and corrupt status quo.

Efforts in support of Guatemala's struggle to return to actual democracy must intensify inside Guatemala and internationally.

For most of the past 70 years, the U.S., Canada and E.U. have maintained full relations with the "democratic governments" of Guatemala, while countless transnational companies, investors and banks – including the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank – have maintained beneficial 'for export' business relations with the 'covenant of the corrupt' elites.

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### **Electoral coup in plain sight - 'death by a 1000 cuts'**

It is impossible to keep up with the attacks being carried out, daily, by the 'covenant of the corrupt' government and allies on the electoral process and against the Semilla Party – a 'death by a 100 cuts' strategy, let alone their on-going persecution of judges, lawyers and prosecutors.

Rights Action continues calls for Canadians Americans and Canadians to share this information widely (including media outlets), and to contact your Senators, Members of Congress and Parliamentarian and urge them to publicly support the Semilla Party and President-elect Bernardo Arevalo and VP-elect Karin Herrera, and to public support calls for the main coup plotters to resign: Attorney General Consuelo Porras, special prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche, Judge Fredy Orellana.

- 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>

### **More information**

- Rights Action's "Guatemala Election Watch" alerts ([www.rightsaction.org/emails](http://www.rightsaction.org/emails))
- Twitter feeds of Festivals Solidarios (@festivalesgt) & Prensa Comunitaria (@PrensaComunitaria)
- Prensa Comunitaria's daily news (<https://prensacomunitaria.org/>)

### **TESTIMONIO-Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala**

Edited by Catherine Nolin & Grahame Russell

<https://btlbooks.com/book/testimonio>

<https://www.testimoniothebook.org>

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

To support land and environmental defenders, and democracy, human rights and justice struggles in Honduras and Guatemala, make check to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- US: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: Box 82858, RPO Cabbagetown, Toronto, ON, M5A 3Y2

Credit-card donations: <https://rightsaction.org/donate/>

Direct deposits, write to: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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Please share and re-post this information

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