

Guatemala Election Watch #44

"We have not been resisting for 63 days. We have been fighting for more than 500 years"

The Real and Indigenous Face of Guatemala's Past, Present and Future.

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/guatemala-election-watch-44>

Below, an important summary of the Indigenous reality of what "Guatemala" is, for more than 500 years, now leading the struggle in defense of the August 20, 2023 election results, and the construction of a different Guatemala for the future.

Iximulew authorities: "We have not been resisting for 63 days. We have been fighting for more than 500 years"

By Regina Pérez, Community Press, 4 December 2023

(Translation by Rights Action)

<https://prensacomunitaria.org/2023/12/la-comunidad-7-9-el-planton-pacifico-que-se-levanta-para-manifestar/>

The Indigenous authorities that had been in resistance on 7th Avenue and 9th Street of Zone 1, since November 21, rose up this Monday to carry out a demonstration that traveled through several streets of the Historic Center of the capital city. It passed by the Supreme Court of Justice and reached the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Fourteen days after its installation, the ancestral authorities of Iximulew announced that several of those who were part of the sit-in, known as Community 7-9, will concentrate in front of the Public Ministry to reinforce support for the occupation in front of that building and others will return to their communities to discuss, reorganize and continue the protest.

Despite the fact that the sit-in was suspended, the demands regarding the resignation of Consuelo Porrás, Rafael Curruchiche, Cinthia Monterroso and Judge Fredy Orellana remain; and one additional demand was included: the veto of decree 18-2023 which refers to the 2024 Budget approved by the Congress on the night of Thursday, November 30.

"We have not been resisting for more than 63 days. We have been fighting and demanding the fulfillment of our rights for more than 500 years. Therefore, no matter how many days are left before the inauguration, it will not make any difference, we will continue in peaceful resistance,

we are still fed up with corruption, we demand an end to all the behaviors of the deputies who shamelessly make decisions", said one of the authorities of Iximulew at the beginning of the demonstration.

The takeover surrounding the Congress

On the morning of Tuesday, November 21, ancestral authorities of Iximulew led a march from Morazán Park, zone 2, to the Congress of the Republic. The objective was to deliver a list of petitions to the Board of Directors of the Legislative Body, however, they were not received and later they were denied access.

Due to the refusal of the Congress to receive them, they decided to set up a sit-in on 7th Avenue and 9th Street, a few blocks from the legislative building. Now, the occupation is known as the 9-7 Community.

"When we arrived here they did not receive our demands, they forced us to stay here, so we created our 9-7 community," said Rigoberto Juárez, authority of the Plurinational Ancestral Government of Huehuetenango, one of the most visible faces in this sit-in that is located one block from the Plaza de la Constitución and the Metropolitan Cathedral.

"Indefinite National Strike, which began on October 2"

Juarez pointed out that they refer to this site as a community, because "human beings do not walk individually, they always walk in groups and when we arrived we did not come alone, we established a meeting point in which we coincide in our actions, our aspirations, demands, in the framework of what we have been calling Indefinite National Strike, which began on October 2".

The Indefinite National Strike to which he refers is the mobilization led by the ancestral authorities of several territories, which gained supporters as the days went by, following the attacks of the MP against the electoral process.



Rigoberto Juárez, authority of the ancestral Plurinational Government of Huehuetenango.

The main point is located in front of the headquarters of the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP), in Barrio Gerona, in zone 1 of the capital, where the caravans and groups traveling from different parts of the country are gathered to demand the resignation of Attorney General Consuelo Porrás and prosecutors Rafael Curruchiche and Cinthia Monterroso.

"The revolution of the staffs"

This resistance completed two months and has been qualified by the indigenous authorities as "the Revolution of the staffs", a peaceful movement of opposition to the coup d'état. [* Staffs being the ornate wooden sticks that community elected leaders carry, while in the role of community leadership.]

The occupation two blocks from Congress consisted of a main tarp, on 7th Avenue. There is an improvised space where the authorities would meet or rest. In front of that tent they offered their speeches and received other authorities and representatives of sectors who wanted to speak about the national situation. Between this space and the one used as a kitchen there was also a place reserved for the altar and ceremonies.



Ancestral authorities of Iximulew. Photo: Mercedes Vaides

On 9th Street there was another tent made of nylon, where some demonstrators rested, protected themselves from the sun and slept. A few meters away, dozens of policemen were guarding the street that leads to 8th Avenue, where the Congress is located.

Santos Estuardo Alvarado, of the Council of Authorities of Chuarrancho, a municipality located an hour and a half from the capital, pointed out that the authorities of Iximulew, which brings together more than 70 at the national level, agreed with those holding the sit-in in front of the MP to hold another sit-in.

We are here to demand that this budget not be approved

"Our idea was not to hold the sit-in in Congress, but somewhere else," he said. The objective of this resistance is to tell the deputies that the approval of the 2024 Budget bill, the impeachment against the magistrates of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), the approval of the "Monsanto" laws and the one that promotes amnesty for the military, are not for the common good but only benefit certain sectors, explained Alvarado.



Estuardo Santos Alvarado, authority of Chuarrancho. Photo Regina Pérez.

Meanwhile, the response of the Congress has been the use of force by having hundreds of agents, although there could be thousands according to the figures given by the National Civil Police (PNC) itself, to guard the deputies.

Gabriel Xi Paxam, an Indigenous authority from El Estor, Izabal, said: "The deputies approved a budget that is not going to favor the Indigenous communities. That is why we are here, to demand that they do not approve this budget, because it does not benefit us, only them," he said.

Xi indicated that the communities of El Estor and other departments are upset and tired of the corruption carried out by the congressmen, approving laws that do not favor the population. The Indigenous authority pointed out that the communities are abandoned, the roads are in bad condition and the children receive classes at tables that the parents themselves provide for the schools.

The ancestral authorities of Izabal and the Polochic Valley were the first to protest outside the Congress but were repressed by the police on the night of November 15, a sample of what would be seen around the Legislative in the coming days.



Gabriel Xi, Indigenous authority of El Estor, Izabal. Photo Regina Pérez.

Rigoberto Juárez, of the Ancestral Authorities of Iximulew explained that democracy in Guatemala is not only being trampled by the MP, but also destroyed by the deputies, the executive branch and the judiciary. "All institutions are contributing to destroy democracy, they are attacking the laws of the country, the actions of the government are unconstitutional," he said.

For this reason, when talking about the defense of democracy, the first thing they demanded was the resignation of Consuelo Porras, considered one of the actors that has destroyed the citizens' right to vote, and it is a demand that has not ceased.

However, in Congress a series of actions are being carried out that affect the country, which is why the first demands are not excluded in this resistance, said Juárez.

Deputies approve budget with restrictions for next president

For her part, Nicté Caal, from the municipality of Tactic, Alta Verapaz, and member of the Committee for Campesino Unity (CUC), said that in the communities the population does not have access to education and health, and yet the deputies continue to subtract allocations for these issues.

In response, Caal pointed out, we women have remained in these struggles, because we are the ones who see the reality of the communities and of other women and children the most. The people have grown tired of the injustices and we are here raising our voices and demanding that our rights be respected, she said.

For Jorge González, Indigenous authority of Baja Verapaz, the objective of the sit-in is due to the fact that the deputies have approved a budget with restrictions for the next president and to transfer more budget to the MP, despite the fact that the population demands the resignation of Attorney General Consuelo Porras.



Jorge González, Achi Authority of Baja Verapaz. Photo Regina Pérez.

Another objective, he added, is to insist on the resignation of those people "who have done so much damage to Guatemala".

On November 30, in the last ordinary session of Congress, a majority of deputies approved the [2024 Budget](#), which reduces allocations for health, security, food and social development, and at the same time will be used to pay political favors.

The uprising of the Indigenous Peoples

The uprising of the Indigenous and ancestral authorities has been an event in the recent history of Guatemala that had only been recorded in 1944 and 1839, according to archaeologist [Diego Vásquez Monterroso](#). He points out that this uprising of the authorities has a national scope and has had the support of ladino and urban sectors.

It is a movement with weaknesses and strengths. Among the strengths, the [academic Demetrio Cojtí](#) points out that they are moderate political actors with experience in social mobilizations that have the support of their communities and have championed the defense of the election results.

He also points out the methodology of struggle as a strength, which is manifested by conviction and not by convenience, and the peaceful modality of the mobilizations.

On the other hand, some people see a division among the authorities as a result of some disagreements that have arisen, a division that Juárez denies.

"They know that we are going to establish resistance in any part of the country, (...) they are taking it upon themselves to maintain the resistance in the MP and they come to accompany us, just as happens in the interior of the country, when the authorities visit a community, here we are the authorities (ancestral authorities of Iximulew) who are in front of this new community, and in Gerona there are others, but there is no difference", he points out when explaining the reason for the second sit-in.

The ancestral authorities that are in Gerona belong to Sololá, Totonicapán, the Xinka, Ixil and Quiché people, who also arrived several times to the place, close to the Congress, to express their support.



Ancestral authorities together with Indigenous authorities of Iximulew in the second sit-in.
Photo Francisco Simón.

"Today more than ever Guatemala is united"

On Monday, November 27, the presence of the ancestral authorities of the Gerona encampment was noteworthy who arrived at the occupation of 7th Avenue. There Juarez and other authorities of Iximulew received them.

On November 29, Misrahí Xoquic, from the Indigenous Mayoralty of Sololá arrived together with the other members of the municipal corporation and expressed that they have not been divided and that they have been working together since October 2. "Today more than ever Guatemala is more united, the corrupt pact tried to divide us but never succeeded, they have not succeeded, they tried with 48 Cantones, Sololá and others", he revealed.

Rufino Lopez Lorenzo, advisor to the Council of Elders of the Indigenous Municipality of Sacapulas, who arrived on November 21, said that Guatemala has awakened and is experiencing a great union throughout the country, not only of the Mayan people but also the Xinka, Garifuna and mestizo people.

"Let it be recorded in history that we did not remain with our arms crossed."

At 73 years old, Maria Toj Medrano, a historic leader of CUC, an organization that emerged in the late 1970s, is one of the attendees at the sit-in on November 29. For many years, saying her first surname, "Toj" was a danger to her. One of her brothers, Baltazar, was murdered in Santa Cruz del Quiché in 1980; a second, Francisco, was disappeared in 1983; and one more, Emeterio Toj, was kidnapped by the army in 1981 but managed to escape.

Toj, a short woman, who wears the traditional clothing of the K'iche' women, says that before coming to the meeting she told her children that she would attend even if the deputies did not have the political will to work for the people, "at least let it be recorded in history that we did not stay at home, with our arms crossed, lamenting, just as the song says, it is not enough to pray".



María Toj, leader of the Comité de Unidad Campesina. Photo Regina Pérez.

She also made a call to the different sectors to join forces, because the benefits achieved will be for the children, grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. The leader considered the so-called "Pacto de Corruptos", as the dominant alliance in the country is known, is united but in opposition to the Indigenous authorities who are in front of the central headquarters of the MP and have raised their voices to rescue the fragile democracy in Guatemala.

Maria was one of the people who went to join the protest, on November 30, in the surroundings of the Congress, while the deputies were about to hear the report of the Investigation of the magistrates of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) to withdraw their legal immunity from prosecution. During the early morning of December 1, with the vote of 108 deputies, the immunity of Irma Palencia, Ranulfo Rojas, Gabriel Aguilera and Mynor Franco was withdrawn.

Repression and solidarity

As with the sit-in at the MP, in the 9-7 community there were numerous gestures of solidarity with the demonstrators coming from different parts of the country.

On Tuesday, November 28, a family of food vendors from San Andres Iztapa cooked a pig at the new sit-in that opened on 8th Avenue and 8th Street. The vendors, who did not want to give their names, indicated that they would distribute the dishes to people supporting the protest and that they would not share with the corrupt.

"Guatemala is going through a democratic crisis, we are in solidarity with our comrades because we know that they are risking their lives, they have left their land, and their crops to fight for justice, against the corruption in the country", said one of the vendors about their collaboration.

From the north of the country, residents of the Polochic Valley area, Alta Verapaz and Izabal, have organized themselves in 24-hour shifts to protest. They donated 90 quintals of food, such as rice, beans, Maseca, sugar and salt, which they left in the kitchen, according to the organizers.

Matilde Caal, originally from Panzós, Alta Verapaz, from the organization Mamá Maquín, named after Adelina Caal, who was massacred in Panzós in May 1978, joined the resistance on November 21 and since then has been part of the kitchen. She is also part of the CUC board of directors. In 2012, her family was evicted from the community where they lived in the Polochic Valley.



Matilde Caal is a displaced campesina, she helped cook for the Resistance. Photo Regina Pérez.

Before returning to her community on November 29, the woman said goodbye to the people present and expressed that for her it was a satisfaction to have contributed in the kitchen to prepare food for the protesters.

"On Tuesday I joined the kitchen to prepare the food for my comrades in resistance. I feel happy about that. I'm going to visit my family, because I've been here for 11 days," she said. In an improvised space she prepared food for the three meals, such as beans and rice. As in the

resistance kitchen that operates in the MP, they received all kinds of donations such as eggs, sugar and corn, which is what is most consumed.

A family from zone 7, surnamed Osorio Montúfar, from the San Martín neighborhood, brought a donation of 100 snacks to the sit-in, "for the comrades who are fighting for democracy", they said.

In opposition to the solidarity shown by the population, the Board of Directors of the Congress requested the deployment of hundreds of police officers to guard the streets surrounding the building. The PNC blockades have caused anger among the merchants of the blocks adjacent to the Congress, even against the demonstrators.

Rufino López, advisor to the Council of Elders of the Indigenous Mayor's Office of Sacapulas, Quiché, indicated that on Tuesday, November 28, business owners approached them to ask about a solution because they were losing customers. "We responded, the police have the blockade, not us," said Lopez.



Rufino López, from the Council of Elders of the Indigenous Municipality of Sacapulas. Photo Regina Pérez.

That day, the authorities made a tour of the blocks where the agents were and realized that the congressmen were entering through 8th Avenue and 8th Street, which is why they decided to block that route.

The former indigenous mayor of Sacapulas said that it did not take long for riot police to arrive and threaten to evict them, but he indicated that they defended themselves and later delegates from the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH) arrived and the situation calmed down.

"We have been here forever"

While a block away from the second peaceful takeover hundreds of people are having fun in the Paseo de la Sexta, installed in the Plaza de la Constitución, the indigenous authorities of Iximulew reflect on the legacy that this struggle will leave and what they have achieved so far.

Santos Estuardo Alvarado, from the council of Authorities of Chuarrancho, joined the struggle for the recovery of their communal lands at the age of 23. For 13 years he was the legal representative of his community and now, at 37 years old, he belongs to the Council, a lifetime position, for his trajectory.

Alvarado considered that what the Indigenous peoples have achieved so far has been an agreement, and the support of their bases that have supported them in these struggles added to the interest of other Guatemalans who have come to show their solidarity with them. "It is a historic action, we have achieved the union of the people who are in favor of democracy," he said.

Maria Toj, from CUC, refers to the 48 Cantons of Totonicapán and the indigenous authorities of Sololá as "the vanguard voice" joined by the K'iche' and other departments such as San Marcos, Chimaltenango and Huehuetenango who have contributed to the public awakening.

"It is the unity we were waiting for so long, we did not see the light at the end of the tunnel. With this lifting of the sacred staff that they did, they united us and have earned the great respect of all," said Toj, who refers to them as "the highest authorities".



Protesters from Alta Verapaz and Izabal at the peaceful sit-in near Congress. Photo Regina Pérez.

"The problem is that structural racism has damaged Guatemala"

For Rigoberto Juárez, the leadership of the indigenous authorities that is being observed is not new. "Our peoples, the communities, the original nationalities have been here since always and the ancestral organization has been permanent and it is not casual. Today it is joining the city. Perhaps what is new is that it is the Indigenous authorities who call to stay here and that exercise is transferred to the city," he said.

Juárez also refers that the Indigenous authorities have been interlocutors in their communities. "The problem is that structural racism has damaged Guatemala so much and this has not been able to make visible the important work of the authorities and their contribution to this system. Who maintains harmony in the coexistence in the communities? This State has no presence," he said.

The Indigenous authority noted that in the city there is no governance. "The only thing they do is repress, they have repression in their head, that is not governance. On the other hand, in our communities there is governance and governability," he concluded.

([Regina Pérez](#): Journalist and communicator. I am curious and passionate about social networks. My roots are from the Maya K'iche' culture).

Coup d'état: 'Death by a 1000 cuts'

The *Pacto de Corruptos* ('Covenant of the Corrupt') government and traditional elites of Guatemala – longtime “democratic allies” of the U.S., Canada, E.U., World Bank and transnational corporations – continue to try and block or overthrow the August 20, 2023 elections, won by President-elect Bernardo Arevalo & VP-elect Karin Herrera of the Semilla Party.

1 month, 9 days until Jan.14, 2024 transfer of power
Stay tuned ... This is not over

Guatemala Election Watch alerts:

www.rightsaction.org/emails

Rights Action calls for Americans and Canadians to keep sharing these informations widely (including media outlets), and to contact your Senators, Members of Congress and Parliamentarian, urge them to publicly support the Semilla Party and President-elect Bernardo Arevalo and VP-elect Karin Herrera, and to 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

- Festivales Solidarios @festivalesgt
- Prensa Comunitaria @PrensaComunitaria; <https://prensacomunitaria.org/>
- NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with People of Guatemala): www.nisgua.org; https://twitter.com/NISGUA_Guate
- GHRC (Guatemalan Human Rights Commission): www.ghrc-usa.org; <https://twitter.com/GHRCUSA>
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