

January 14, 2024: A day to honor the Guatemalan people (and countless exiled Guatemalans and activists around the world)

By Grahame Russell, Rights Action

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/a-day-to-honor-the-guatemalan-people>

On January 14, 2024, the first actually democratic government since 1954 took office in Guatemala. President Bernardo Arevalo and VP Karin Herrera of the Semilla Party have been sworn into office.

This electoral victory is due to the courage, vision and tenacity of the Guatemala people.

Not only did they confront and overcome –for now– the wealth and power, corruption and impunity of the traditional Guatemala elites, known as the *Pacto de Corruptos* (covenant of the corrupt), but they overcame decades of almost unconditional support for the traditional elites from the mis-named “international community” – primarily the U.S., Canada and E.U., and World Bank, IDB, global banks and companies that, for decades, have maintained beneficial economic, political and military relations with corrupt, repressive governments, referring to them as “democratic allies.”

Mil gracias (a thousand thanks) to Rights Action supporters and donors for years (in some cases almost 30 years) of trust and support for our work in Guatemala. Thank-you for your own activism in support of the rights and well-being of the Guatemala people, and other peoples in oppressed Global South countries.

Rights Action is one of many groups that has chipped away for years, supporting many human rights, justice, land and environmental defense struggles led by mainly Indigenous peoples. The communities involved in each of these difficult struggles also joined the country-wide, six-month battle in defense of the results of the 2023 elections. (Read our [Guatemala Election Watch alerts](#), starting July 2, 2023)

Like Guatemalans in exile and groups around the world, Rights Action has also chipped away at documenting and denouncing the complicity of this mis-named “international community” that effectively helped keep the traditional elites in power all these decades.

It is hard to overstate ...

January 14, 2024 in Guatemala is similar to January 27, 2022 in Honduras, when the first actually democratic government took office after almost 13 years of violence and corruption at the hands of the U.S. and Canadian-backed narco-dictatorship. After the 2021 elections were won by President Xiomara Castro and the LIBRE party, [I wrote](#):

“12 years / 5 months after a U.S. and Canadian-backed military coup ousted Honduras’ last democratic government, actual democratic elections took place. The U.S. / Canadian-backed, drug-trafficking, military-backed candidate did NOT win. It is hard to overstate the joy of most Hondurans, after 12 years / 5 months of systemic repression and corruption, human rights violations and exploitation under a narco-trafficking, military-backed regime supported and ‘legitimized’ by the U.S., Canada, other governments and actors in the so-called “international community”.

It is hard to overstate the amount of death and suffering, destruction and loss caused by this regime from the day of the military coup (June 28, 2009) through to the November 28, 2021 election of President Xiomara Castro.

It is impossible to know exactly how many 100s of 1000s of Hondurans were forced to flee into exile, trying to find safe haven in Mexico or the U.S. from the ravages of this government, since the 2009 coup.

It is hard to overstate the complicity and responsibility of the U.S., Canada, Spain and the E.U., the World Bank, IADB and IMF, and numerous global companies. There is no plausible way this regime would have remained in power without the ‘legitimization’ of the 2009 coup and 12 years / 5 months of full relations with this “international community”.

Much the same can be said about Guatemala.

Moreover, if it is “hard to overstate the amount of death and suffering, destruction and loss [in Honduras]”, it is impossible to calculate the death and suffering, destruction and loss in Guatemala since 1954, particularly when one remembers the years of scorched earth massacres, disappearances and genocides in four Mayan regions of the highlands in the 1970s and 80s.

Opposition from inside and outside the country

January 14 was a day to celebrate late into the night. January 15 marks the beginning of a new chapter of work and struggle to transform countless economic, social, legal, political and land tenure aspects of this profoundly unjust, unequal, repressive and corrupt country.

Opposition from the corrupted traditional elites to serious reforms has already begun in Guatemala, and will only get worse. Inevitably, opposition will also come from the same mis-named “international community”.

Be not fooled by recent statements made by the governments of the U.S., Canada and the E.U., about the importance of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, etc. Public statements aside, this “international community” has always prioritized its own economic and political interests - full stop. There is no reason to expect otherwise this time.

Soon enough, Rights Action –and groups around the world– will assuredly be denouncing again the illegal and aggressive machinations of our mining companies and other sectors of the global economy..., but for now, *mil gracias* to the Guatemala people for their courage, vision and tenacity. As a small part of this, Rights Action says thank-you to our supporters and donors for years of trust and support.

Consider joining Rights Action's

EDUCATIONAL FACT-FINDING DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA, May 4-12, 2024

TESTIMONIO: Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/testimonio-delegation-to-guatemala-2024>

***TESTIMONIO*: Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala**

<https://btlbooks.com/book/testimonio> / <https://www.testimoniothebook.org/>

More information

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

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:

- U.S.: 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

Donate securities, write to: info@rightsaction.org

Please share and re-post this information

info@rightsaction.org / www.rightsaction.org

Subscribe: <https://rightsaction.org/subscribe>

Previous e-Newsletters: <https://rightsaction.org/emails>

<https://www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org>

<https://twitter.com/RightsAction>

<https://www.instagram.com/rightsaction>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/rightsaction>
