


HOW

TO STOP A COUP?

From October 2023 to January 2024, a coup attempt in Guatemala was stopped under the leadership of Indigenous ancestral authorities. The “Corrupt Pact” — a powerful shadow network of corrupt public officials — led the coup effort, threatening Guatemalan democracy. After months of solidarity with the 106-day national strike, convened by the ancestral authorities, we share our reflections in hopes that they inform and inspire internationalist solidarity with the people of Guatemala and beyond.

Indigenous People’s Leadership

Follow the leadership of those impacted by a crisis, who have a social-political goal to address it, and the organizational capacity to win. For example, Indigenous authorities may call for a national strike, to solve conflicts with dialogue, and more.

Indefinite National Strike

Halt the economy and mobility to pressure the financial backers of the coup, and to garner media attention. For example, blockade 100+ key areas, and organize a permanent protest camp.

Mutual Aid

Organize community kitchens, medical services and sleeping arrangements. It builds community and unity which is necessary for long-term sustainability.

Spirituality

Many people find a deep source of energy in ceremonies, prayers, etc. Don’t automatically dismiss these as incompatible with political action.

Culture and Joy

Sing, dance, paint, play games, and have fun. It helps foster good relationships and maintain high spirits in moments that might otherwise turn to cynicism, tension and rigidity.

Adaptability

No tactic is one-size-fits-all. Tactics are tools in a toolkit, to be used as necessary. For example, after weeks of blockading roads, Indigenous leadership might shift to a protest camp in front of one symbolic site.

Popular Involvement

Everyone is important to achieve a major goal. Organize in and through social and political differences: Neighbors, classmates, coworkers, etc. Find common ground, pressure points that each can leverage, and the skills each can share.

International Solidarity

Governments, multilateral organizations, and grassroots groups can support with statements, sanctions, media, accompaniment, etc.. For example, the U.N. might mediate negotiations; grassroots groups lead popular education.

Clarity of Vision

It is essential to clearly identify problems, solutions, comrades, opponents, and barriers. Communication matters to mobilize masses of people. For example, clarify you are not siding with a party, but defending democracy.

LISTENING TO INDIGENOUS Leaders

NISGUA collaborated with the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) to publish an interview series with our Guatemalan partners. This series fills a major gap in the international coverage of the political crisis by interviewing Indigenous groups, on the frontlines of multiple struggles, on how they view this political moment, and what lies ahead.

Xinka Parliament

Indigenous Xinka ancestral authorities, leading a land defense struggle against the transnational corporation Pan American Silver, and conveners of the strike.

“I think it is time for a change not only for Guatemala, but for more countries that also suffer from this parasite [of corruption], which kills more every day.”



Association for Justice and Reconciliation

Organization of Maya Indigenous survivors of state-sponsored genocide during Guatemala’s armed conflict, they lead key transitional justice cases and were actively involved in the strike.

“We are trying to change the country. That is why the communities and regions are rising up—not for the [Semilla] party, but for democracy. We don’t allow ourselves [be pushed around].”




International Mayan League

Indigenous Mayan organization, in the diaspora, at the forefront of political, cultural, social, and spiritual preservation among Mayan migrant communities.

“We ask the international community to reflect on our struggles, which are sacred. They’re not about ambition. They’re in defense of life, dignity, and the defense of our territories, which have been occupied.”



 Credits photo page 1: Photo by NISGUA. Sacred fire in ceremony for the anniversary of the Departmental Assembly of Huehuetenango. July 2023.

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