



NISGUA
 Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala

Social movements fight institutionalized impunity

In the midst of a global political shift to the right, Guatemala's elite has renewed efforts to consolidate power and evade accountability. Their strategy includes a **legislative proposal to grant amnesty to war criminals and repeated attacks on the U.N.-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)**, credited with strengthening institutional capacity to address corruption and grave human rights abuses.

Under pressure of corruption charges, the Jimmy Morales administration has repeatedly sought to undermine CICIG, backed by tacit and even outright approval from the U.S. political right. The situation escalated to what many have called a technical coup in early January, when Morales ordered the expulsion of CICIG in defiance of Constitutional Court orders. The ongoing crisis threatens an accountability backslide, which would further entrench impunity and corruption in the country and **exacerbate the conditions that endanger social justice organizers' lives and force people to migrate to the U.S.**

CICIG & Jimmy Morales: What to know

CICIG: est. 2006 to aid investigations into organized crime and illicit security networks that took root during the Internal Armed Conflict; has conducted 600+ investigations, including into two sitting presidents.

Morales: elected in 2016 on an anti-corruption platform; backed by right-wing military party founded to protect retired officials against war crimes prosecution.

2017: CICIG helped uncover campaign finance violations, leading to calls for impeachment. Congress members also accused of corruption rallied behind Morales, who avoided impeachment and scaled up his attacks on CICIG.

2018: Attacks on CICIG began to include public displays of military force by the Morales administration.

2019: Morales openly defied the country's highest court by expelling CICIG in what is widely considered a technical coup. The move raised international alarm, but only vague statements from the U.S. Embassy and the Trump administration, suggesting tacit support for Morales' power grab.

To date: Social movement organizations in Guatemala City report increased intimidation. CICIG continues to operate from outside the country.

Iniciative 5377: The Amnesty Law

The Guatemalan Congress is moving closer to legislating impunity for crimes against humanity, sexual violence, forced disappearance, and genocide. **A proposed amendment to the National Reconciliation Law would allow amnesty for crimes committed during the Internal Armed Conflict.** It would also halt investigation and prosecution of multiple open cases, and would free people awaiting trial or already convicted within 24 hours of a judge granting permission.

Guatemalan survivors have rallied against the amendment under the cry, "Amnesty is Impunity." **Maya Achí sexual violence survivors, already leading a court case against their attackers, filed an injunction to contest the amendment's legality.** Guatemalan organizations, including NISGUA partners CALDH and H.I.J.@.S., have held marches and released statements demanding survivors' rights to truth and justice.

Who benefits from amnesty?

BENEDICTO LUCAS GARCIA
 Retired Brigadier General, Guatemalan Military
 Army Chief of Staff
 (8/15/2981-3/21/1982)

Sentenced to 58 years in prison for forced disappearance, crimes against humanity, and aggravated rape in the Molina Theissen Case
 Defendant in CREOMPAZ/Military Zone 21 Case
 Accused in 2000 of ordering massacres in Ixil, Ixcán, and Rabinal regions

Left image: Infographic made by Verdad y Justicia Guatemala, translated by NISGUA. Header photo: Protestors gather outside of the Constitutional Court to stand together against Morales' attacks on the Court and CICIG. Photo credit: Prensa Libre

“Executive and oligarchic powers have kept the country under their heels for many years, but today the true Guatemalans have woken up to defend our human rights and demand respect for the voice of the people. By contaminating our natural resources, sowing social division, and devaluing our country’s sustainable production, they force Guatemalan families to immigrate to other countries.”

Marta Muñoz Montenegro

is a land defender with the Peaceful Resistance to the Escobal Silver Mine in Jalapa.



Silvia Osorio

is an educator with the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) through Fundebase.



“Defenders against mines and dams, and survivors of the Internal Armed Conflict have suffered human rights violations. However, the president still has not commented on this violence, instead talking about the CICIG’s supposed attacks on the elite. He only cares about their rights because they have money.”

“Guatemala: where the personal interests of the politicians are valued over the needs of the country and the law. Guatemala needs a renovation which can only be achieved when we all unite and remind the politicians that they serve Guatemala, and Guatemala does not serve them.”



Danety Rodríguez

is a land defender with Youth Organized in Defense of Life (JODVID), which resists the Escobal Silver Mine.



Abner Elias Osorio

is the youth representative and treasurer on the board of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR).

“Because of corruption the state does not fulfill its basic responsibilities to Indigenous peoples. In order to live a dignified life we need to spend all our time in the fields or even migrate. Many of our people have had to abandon the AJR just to survive. Impunity means that we may never have what we so desire: that genocide is never committed again.”

THE RIGHT TO MIGRATE & THE RIGHT TO STAY

NISGUA stands with social movements that have been fighting impunity and corruption for decades, with Guatemalan communities who have been struggling for centuries for the conditions and the right to stay in their homes, and with all people who cross colonial borders as immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION, SEE OUR TIMELINES, MEDIA ADVISORY, AND PARTNER STATEMENTS AT NISGUA.ORG

Bottom image: A caravan of asylum seekers makes its way north. Photo credit: The Atlantic. Our thanks to Marta, Silvia, Danety, and Abner for their photos and quotes.