

Guatemala: “No rest for the weary”. Corrupt, repressive regime’s “state of siege” will drive more mainly Mayan people to flee home and country

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“Much of the affected region in eastern Guatemala is inhabited by indigenous Maya Q’eqchi’ communities fighting for land rights and against nickel mining and oil palm plantations.”

Background

“Guatemala in grip of 'mafia coalition'”, The Guardian, 28 Aug 2019

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/28/guatemala-corruption-mafia-coalition-jimmy-morales>

Guatemala's congress approves state of siege despite protests

by [Sandra Cuffe](#), 7 Sept 2019

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/guatemala-congress-approves-state-siege-protests-190908014110498.html>



A woman holds a sign that reads 'No to the state of siege' in front of one of the police lines in Guatemala City [Jeff Abbott/Al Jazeera]

Guatemala City - Guatemalan legislators voted on Saturday to ratify a state of siege in the eastern part of the country, despite protests by social groups. Outgoing President Jimmy Morales established the 30-day state of siege on Wednesday by executive decree after three soldiers were killed a day earlier in eastern [Guatemala](#). Congress had passed a resolution on Wednesday urging the executive branch to issue the decree.

"We ask all institutions and also the population to cooperate and collaborate with all the work our security forces will do," Morales said on Wednesday after announcing the measure.

The state of siege is in effect in the entire department of Izabal and in 17 municipalities across five of Guatemala's 22 other departments. It suspends many constitutional guarantees, including the freedoms of movement and assembly. It also implements a night curfew for the affected areas.

According to the government, the military was engaged in counter-narcotics operations on Tuesday when local residents working for drug traffickers killed three troops. Community reports and an initial forensic evaluation contradict the official version of events. Police and prosecutor's office investigations into the incident continue, as does the militarisation of eastern Guatemala.

Rights groups condemn move

The measure sparked widespread condemnation from human rights and social groups. The significant geographic scope of the state of siege is one of the key points of concern. "The geographic coverage can only respond to the scene of the incident," Iduvina Hernandez, director of the Association for the Study and Promotion of Security in Democracy, told Al Jazeera.

Much of the affected region in eastern Guatemala is inhabited by indigenous Maya Q'eqchi' communities fighting for land rights and against nickel mining and oil palm plantations.

Several predominantly Maya Q'eqchi' municipalities included in the state of siege were hard hit by massacres, forced disappearances, and other military atrocities during the country's 1960-1996 civil war between the army and leftist rebel forces.

Of the five kinds of states of exception under Guatemalan law, a state of siege, which concentrates operation under military command, is second only to a state of war.

"The magnitude allows them to militarise or remilitarise a region with a high level of conflict, where communities are opposed to extractive industry projects," Hernandez said on Saturday outside Congress, where drumming activists urged legislators entering the building not to ratify the state of siege.

The Campesino Unity Committee (CUC), a long-standing rural social movement group, organised a march on Saturday from the presidential palace to Congress, but the march was stopped by police two blocks from the building. Police cordoned off several blocks in downtown Guatemala City to prevent all but a handful of protesters from reaching Congress.

CUC coordinator Daniel Pascual is concerned the government could use the state of siege to pursue pending community evictions and arrest local leaders. "We think that is one of their objectives," Pascual told Al Jazeera during the protest action halted by police barricades. "The situation is gradually becoming clearer," Pascual said.

Saturday's ratification came after Congress passed amendments to the decree that increase transparency and accountability regarding government and spending under the state of siege, and require a report from the National Security Council about achievements during the state of siege.

The Xinka Parliament, the representative body of the indigenous Xinka people, filed a legal challenge on Friday in the Constitutional Court against the state of siege. Additional legal challenges are expected now that Congress has ratified the measure.

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Why are 100s of thousands of Hondurans & Guatemalans fleeing this year alone?

The U.S., Canada and “international community” are helping keep in place the very conditions that force Hondurans and Guatemalans to flee their countries, every year.

Impunity for U.S. & Canadian policies

The U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank and global businesses and investors (hydro-electric dams, mining, African palm, sugar cane and fruit production, garment “sweatshop” factors, tourism, etc.) maintain profitable relations with anti-democratic, corrupt, repressive governments in Honduras and Guatemala, participating in or benefitting from exploitation and repression, environmental harms and human rights violations, corruption and impunity.

There is no political or legal oversight or accountability in the U.S. and Canada for our complicity in Guatemala and Honduras’ nightmare.

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- Speakers: Invite us to give presentations about these inter-connected issues and struggles
- Delegations: Join human rights educational trips to [Guatemala and Honduras](#)
- Daily news: www.democracynow.org; www.theintercept.com; www.telesurtv.net/english; www.therealnews.com; www.theguardian.com/us-news; www.rabble.ca;

Act – Stir up the pot – Chip away

Call, write, act - stir up the pot. Keep sending copies of Rights Action information (and that of other solidarity groups/ NGOs) to family, friends and networks, politicians and media – always asking the question as to why our governments, companies and investment firms benefit from and turn a blind eye to poverty, repression and violence, environmental and health harms that caused the forced migrancy / refugee crisis in Guatemala and Honduras.

- 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>

Other solidarity/ NGO groups in U.S. and Canada

Honduras Solidarity Network: www.hondurassolidarity.org;

Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective: www.solidaritycollective.org;

School of Americas Watch: www.soaw.org;

Common Frontiers Canada: www.commonfrontiers.ca;

Breaking the Silence: www.breakingthesilenceblog.com;

NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with People of Guatemala): www.nisgua.org;

Mining Watch Canada: www.miningwatch.ca;

CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with People of El Salvador): www.cispes.org;

Alliance for Global Justice: www.afgj.org;

CODEPINK: www.codepink.org;

GHRC (Guatemalan Human Rights Commission): www.ghrc-usa.org;

Mining Injustice Solidarity Network: <https://mininginjustice.org>;

Mining Justice Alliance: <https://miningjusticealliance.wordpress.com>;

Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor: <https://simcoecountyhondurasrightsmonitor.wordpress.com>;

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