

Guatemala Election Watch #22

**Assassination plots against  
President-elect Bernardo Arevalo & VP-elect Karin Herrera**

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/assassination-plots-against-guatemala-pres-vp-elect>

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**"Plan Colosio": Attempted assassination of Bernardo Arévalo  
and the involvement of state agents**

By Jody Garcia, Plaza Publica, August 24, 2023

<https://www.plazapublica.com.gt/content/plan-colosio-la-tentativa-de-asesinar-bernardo-arevalo-y-la-vinculacion-de-agentes-estales>

On Thursday, August 24, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted protective measures in favor of the presidential candidate Bernardo Arévalo and Karin Herrera.

The warrant revealed the existence of two attempts on the lives of the Semilla Party candidates before and after the second round of elections; in one of them, state agents were allegedly part of the conspiracy.

The IACHR questioned why, although the government of Alejandro de Giammattei knew about the plans, it did not take immediate action.

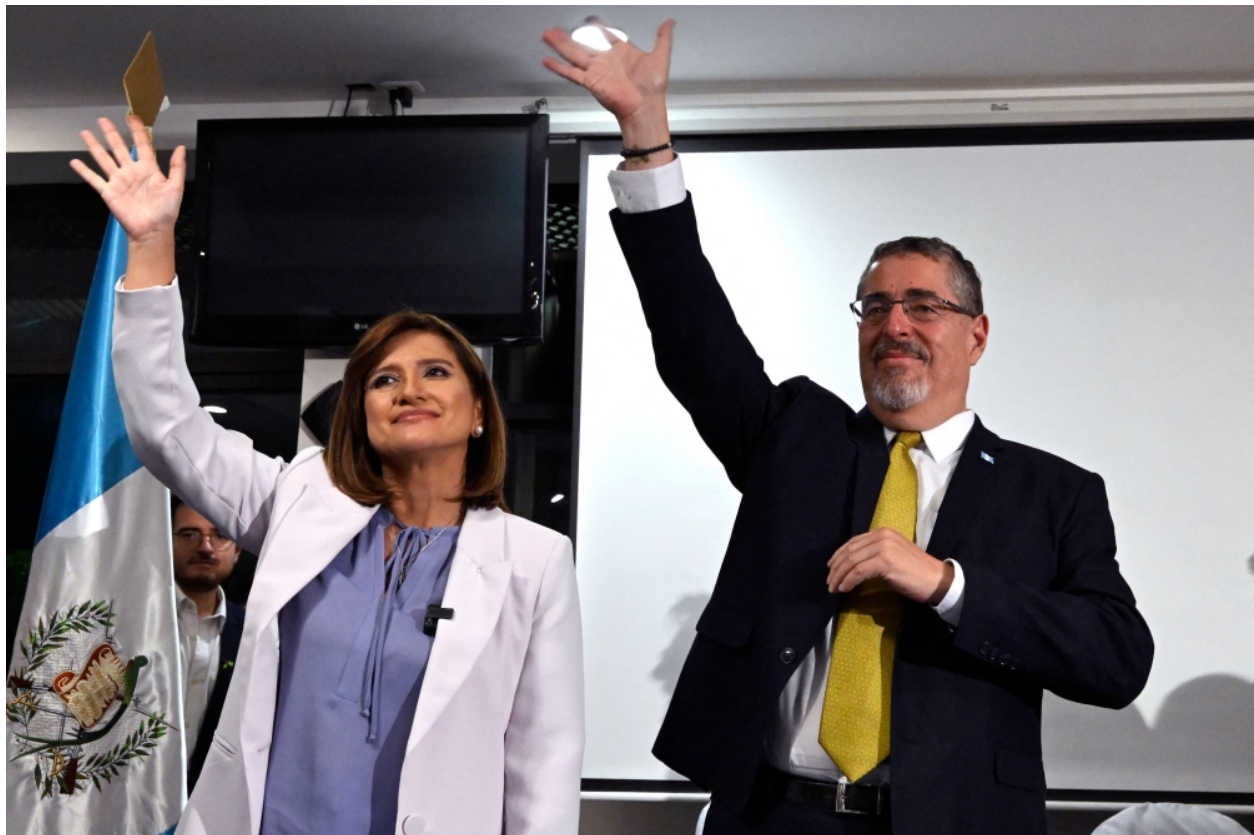
On the night of Sunday, August 20, 2023, dozens of national and international journalists were waiting at the Hotel Las Américas, located in Guatemala City, for the press conference of Bernardo Arévalo and Karin Herrera, the presidential pair that won the second round of the election that day against candidate Sandra Torres. The conference was delayed without any details being known at the time.

This Thursday, August 24, the IACHR ordered the State of Guatemala to take precautionary measures in favor of the elected pair. These actions are ordered by the IACHR in cases where one or more persons are in a serious and urgent situation of suffering irreparable harm.

The document reveals that on Sunday night [August 20], four investigators from the Prosecutor's Office Against Extortion went to the hotel to warn Arevalo that his life was in danger. The unit of the Public Ministry had received privileged information indicating that members of criminal gang structures had a plan to make an attempt on Arévalo's life. This had also been reported to the National Civil Police.

In the same document, the IACHR also reveals that the Semilla party also stated that five days before the second round of elections, Arevalo's security team received "worrying information" about the existence of the "Colosio Plan", a strategy to assassinate him with the "participation of state agents and private individuals".

At the same time, Arévalo told The New York Times that he was aware that he was being persecuted and monitored by the General Directorate of Civil Intelligence (Digici), a fact that the Ministry of the Interior flatly denied.



The newly elected president and VP greet supporters on evening of August 20. Photo: Qatar Peninsula

According to the information revealed by the IACHR, Arevalo reported that as of July 3, one week after the first round of voting [June 25], when he advanced to the second round, at least three sources within state institutions with a high degree of reliability, and who do not know each other, warned him of the existence of the plan, referring to the 1994 assassination of Luis Donado Colosio, candidate of the Mexican PRI party.

The IACHR decision describes that according to Arévalo's team, the State was aware of these threats and yet did not deactivate the risks through an adequate investigation, but limited itself to "indicating that it had not received any complaints, despite the fact that these acts should be prosecuted officially".

At that time, Arevalo's security scheme was scarce and he had to resort to private agents. In response to the threats the government of Alejandro Giammattei provided him with reinforcement through the Secretariat of Administrative and Security Affairs (SAAS). This consisted of 20 agents distributed by shifts and who were not with the candidate on a permanent basis.

Another serious concern that Semilla's team raised before the IACHR is that Arévalo was traveling in a borrowed vehicle with level three armor, which would be below the level recommended by experts for a person at risk like him, who should be driving with level seven armor.

The same situation was reported with Karin Herrera, vice-president-elect, who uses an armored vehicle lent by a supporter.

"The security schemes would not be sufficient to respond adequately to such high levels of risk and it would be more than urgent to reinforce them," the IACHR ruling underlines.

Among the list of facts that Semilla party and Arévalo reported to the IACHR is the leaking of information on criminal proceedings against the party to anonymous Twitter accounts. Most notably, the user Yes Master! who has had unrestricted access to the case of the Special Prosecutor against Impunity (Feci), even when the Semilla party's lawyers have requested to see the file on more than 25 occasions without the Public Prosecutor's Office agreeing to it.

They also denounced that last July 9, Ricardo Méndez Ruiz, president of the Foundation Against Terrorism, allegedly threatened to prosecute Arévalo criminally "for several serious crimes" and that he published expressions such as "prisoner or fugitive", a warning that he would take him to prison or force him into exile, as has happened with other judges, prosecutors and journalists under the eye of this extreme right-wing organization.

The response sent by the State to the IACHR states that the government considered that "no serious situation is evident" and that the attacks on social networks against Semilla party and its candidates "are consistent with the issuance of public opinions and, being within the freedom of expression, cannot be prosecuted or sanctioned by the State".

That same day, Arevalo told the media that he had been notified of the precautionary measures and that he would meet with the Giammattei government to coordinate what actions would be taken.

Regarding the Public Prosecutor's Office, the IACHR warned that there is a history of concern about judicial persecution and the lack of independence of the Prosecutor's Office, which has prosecuted more than a dozen former prosecutors investigating corruption and has had "interference in the electoral process".

The IACHR's findings raised reactions, including that of Juan Francisco Sandoval, a former prosecutor now in exile due to complaints filed by the Foundation against Terrorism, who was removed from his post by Attorney General Consuelo Porras, when his investigations targeted President Giammattei.

"It has not been enough to use the judicial system, now they are using the state security structures to try to deprive Bernardo Arevalo and Karin Herrera of their lives," he wrote on Twitter.

From the notification of the precautionary measures in favor of the elected presidential candidate, the State of Guatemala has 15 days to report on the measures adopted to protect his life and physical integrity.

This week the Semilla party suspended its public celebration for the election of Arévalo and Herrera. Both also did not appear at the Obelisco Plaza, where on the night of Sunday, August 20, thousands of sympathizers came to

celebrate the victory at the polls, instead waving from one of the balconies of the Hotel Las Américas.

The last appearance of the elected couple in a massive open-air event was during his campaign closing, where he was surrounded by a large security detail.

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TRUTHOUT article by Grahame Russell

**Guatemalans Voted to End 69 Years of Corrupt Rule. Will US, Canada Accept It?  
To understand Guatemala's challenges going forward, we must ask questions about  
the role of the international community.**

By Grahame Russell, Rights Action, August 21, 2023, Guatemala City

<https://truthout.org/articles/guatemalans-voted-to-end-69-years-of-corrupt-rule-will-us-canada-accept-it/>

**More information**

- Rights Action's "Guatemala Election Watch" alerts ([www.rightsaction.org/emails](http://www.rightsaction.org/emails))
- Twitter feeds of Festivales Solidarios (@festivalesgt) & Prensa Comunitaria (@PrensaComunitaria)
- Prensa Comunitaria's daily news (<https://prensacomunitaria.org/>)

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