

## Guatemala Election Watch #26

# President-elect Bernardo Arevalo calls on coup plotters to resign

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/president-elect-arevalo-calls-for-coup-plotters-to-resign>

““The coup plotters must resign,” President-elect Arevalo said, naming officials at centre of [efforts targeting](#) his Movimiento Semilla party: Attorney General Consuelo Porras, special prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche, Judge Fredy Orellana.”



Photo: Prensa Comunitaria

### **‘Death by a thousand cuts’**

Is the strategy of the ‘Covenant of the Corrupt’ regime in power - long-time “democratic allie” of US, Canada and “international community”, to prevent President-elect Arevalo and VP-elected Karin Herrera from taking power on January 14, 2023, or to weaken them such that their executive branch powers will be completely curtailed by the time they assume the Presidency.

Four months until January 14, 2024 transfer of power

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**Guatemala's crisis deepens amid new raids, suspended gov't transition.  
President-elect Bernardo Arevalo temporarily suspends government transition  
after electoral tribunal facilities raided.**

Al Jazeera, 13 Sep 2023

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/13/guatemalas-crisis-deepens-amid-new-raids-suspended-govt-transition>

A political crisis in Guatemala continues to deepen, as [President-elect Bernardo Arevalo](#) this week said he was suspending his participation in the government transition over raids on electoral tribunal facilities.

Arevalo on Tuesday called for the resignation of Guatemala's attorney general and other officials after government agents raided facilities storing ballots.

He said he would return to the transition process only when necessary conditions were met.

"The coup plotters must resign," Arevalo said during a news conference, naming three officials at the centre of [legal efforts targeting](#) his Movimiento Semilla party: Attorney General Consuelo Porras, special prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche, and Judge Fredy Orellana.

"They have deviated from their constitutional function of investigating and prosecuting, fully towards a clear coup d'état in progress," he said.

**What happened during the raids?**

Agents from the Guatemalan Attorney General's Office on Tuesday raided facilities of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal storing ballots from the [country's June 25 election](#), in which Arevalo pulled off a massive upset to advance to a run-off.

They opened boxes of votes and photographed their contents in what experts called an "unprecedented" violation of the law.

Before Arevalo's eventual second-round win on August 20, Currichiche's office [sought to suspend his political party](#), provoking international consternation over attempted election interference.

Currichiche told reporters on Tuesday that the latest raids had nothing to do with any investigation into Movimiento Semilla, but rather a "citizen complaint" of alleged irregularities.

### **What did the Supreme Electoral Tribunal say?**

Luis Gerardo Ramirez, a spokesman for the tribunal, said the body had not given permission to open the boxes and said the raid was being carried out by the Attorney General's Office with the order of a judge.

The Attorney General's Office had asked to review at least 160 boxes of votes from various parts of [the country](#), Ramirez said.

Guatemalan law permits only personnel of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the teams that count the votes at polling places on election day to handle the secret ballots.

Gloria Lopez, the tribunal's electoral director, called the actions "unprecedented". "The law does not establish a process for this," she said, adding that only the receiving authority at each polling place on the day of the election is supposed to review the marked ballots.

Lopez said votes in the opened boxes do not have a digital backup. She said by handling them, the Attorney General's Office was breaking the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's chain of custody.

"We would no longer be able to ensure what exactly are the votes that are inside the electoral boxes and what is the number of signatures and fingerprints on the [polling place tally sheets] that are going in the boxes," she said.

### **What did Arevalo say?**

Arevalo has called the investigation of his electoral victory by the prosecutor's office last month part of a coup attempt and described Tuesday's raids as "flagrant

crimes of abuse of authority for electoral purposes” that violated Guatemala’s constitution.

The president-elect also said his participation in the government transition would resume once the “necessary institutional [and] political conditions are re-established”.

In a statement, outgoing [President Alejandro Giammattei’s](#) government said it respected Arevalo’s decision but did not agree with it because it was made as a result of actions beyond the executive branch, “which do not interfere with the process that had been developed to date”.

It remains unclear if and how Arevalo’s move will affect the constitutionally-mandated transfer of power on January 14.

### **What have other observers said?**

An Organization of American States (OAS) electoral observation mission to Guatemala, which had already reported that prosecutors’ accusations against the voting process lacked any foundation, expressed “deep concern” over Tuesday’s raids.

“The opening of electoral packages by people and institutions other than those designated by law represents a frontal attack on the integrity of the vote and an affront to the popular will,” the mission said in a [statement](#).

It added that the actions were “further proof” that the prosecutor’s office “has been intensifying a strategy of questioning the electoral process and intimidating electoral authorities, electoral personnel and the thousands of people who, with great civic commitment, carried out two days of peaceful and transparent voting”.

Brian Nichols, assistant secretary for western hemisphere affairs at the US State Department, also condemned the raids. “This unprecedented action undermines the democratic transition and the will of the Guatemalan people,” he wrote on social media.

Meanwhile, Ovidio Orellana, former president of Guatemala's bar association, said there is no legal basis giving power to a judge or prosecutors to touch the electoral boxes or votes. "It is an arbitrary act," he said.

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## **"Coups plotters must resign"**

### **US and Canadian governments must support calls by President-elect Bernardo Arevalo for coup plotters to resign: ...**

It is impossible to keep up with the breadth of attacks being carried out, daily, by the Guatemalan Covenant of the Corrupt regime, and their allies, on the electoral process and against the Semilla Party – a 'death by a 100 cuts' strategy.

The US and Canadian governments, our companies and investors, have a significant measure of responsibility for what is occurring in Guatemala, given the past 69 years of full economic, political and military relations with corrupt, repressive regimes.

Rights Action calls for Americans and Canadians to share this information widely (including media outlets), and to contact your Senators, Members of Congress and Parliamentarian and urge them to publicly support calls by President-elect Bernardo Arevalo for coup plotters to resign: Attorney General Consuelo Porras, special prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche, Judge Fredy Orellana.

- 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>

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### **Guatemalans Voted to End 69 Years of Corrupt Rule. Will US, Canada Accept It?**

By Grahame Russell, TRUTHOUT, August 21, 2023, Guatemala City

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

### **Grahame Russell speaks about Guatemalan elections, and hope for the country long torn by war, exploitation, impunity and injustice.**

Radio interview, KGNU community radio, Hemispheres

Listen: <https://bit.ly/3Pg6fi0>

### **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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Credit-card donations: <https://rightsaction.org/donate/>

Direct deposits, write to: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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