

FORMAL COMMUNICATION

Guatemala City, April 25, 2018

Sen. Roger F. Wicker, Chairman
U.S. Helsinki Commission

Sen. Ben Cardin, Ranking Member
U.S. Helsinki Commission

Rep. Chris Smith, Co-Chairman
U.S. Helsinki Commission

Rep. Alcee L. Hastings, Ranking Member
U.S. Helsinki Commission

Distinguished Senators and Representatives,

As a group and consortium of civil society organizations working on migration related issues, we have closely followed the interest and support that your government has given to our country, especially in matters related to the fight against corruption.

We consider the creation and implementation of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) a successful model because it has undeniably strengthened the national justice system, and the Guatemalan citizenry's call for a renewed and transparent government. At the same time, its work was affected networks and groups that have operated with total impunity within the State.

With this in mind, we would like to express our satisfaction and firm support to the work of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, CICIG. Specifically, we recognize the leadership of Commissioner, Mr. Iván Velásquez, who, within his competence and institutional mandate, is carrying out a fierce battle against the actions of the criminal networks who have lived off the dynamics of corruption embedded in the Guatemalan State.

Guatemala has already taken an important step toward greater transparency, an essential element for the strengthening of the rule of law. These steps have been firm and well directed thanks to the support of the international community and other actors who have supported these efforts in specific and determined ways through resources, experiences, statements, and other measures that have supported significant changes in favor of the application of justice and zero tolerance to acts, practices and behaviors of corruption.

Guatemala today is at a crucial stage. We are transitioning from a State co-opted by structures that have concentrated power, wealth and resources, corrupt officials, and organized criminal groups, towards the construction of a democratic State with a strengthened justice system.

The individuals, groups and sectors that have seen their interests, their benefits, and their networks of corruption under investigation have pushed back and devised actions, specific to their ways of operating, against CICIG and its members. Undoubtedly, at this moment, they will use all of their resources, and do all they can because they resist to disappear. The Commissioner and CICIG have been able to handle this situation, however, it is necessary that the Commission's allies continue to show their support and underscore the value of the CICIG as a critical mechanism to help build a new country.

As we have expressed to other U.S. officials, Guatemalan civil society organizations working on migration related issues are highly committed to supporting the work of CICIG in Guatemala under the management and leadership of Commissioner Iván Velásquez. Moreover, we have also insisted that there is still a need to further investigate the cases of migrant trafficking and trafficking in persons.

With this in mind, according to the investigation carried out by the Public Prosecutor's Office and the CICIG, the investigation into the migration case in which the Bitkov family was implicated, was able to identify a criminal structure that was selling false migratory documentation and involved in the alteration of the civil status of persons. Members of the criminal structure were convicted which has an effect of dissuading the existence of this type of criminal practices. Today, by resolution of the Constitutional Court, the legal situation of the Bitkov family is still in litigation, and bears no implications in the dismantling of the criminal structure mentioned, which is why it is considered a success for CICIG since it complies with its mandate of dismantling illegal and clandestine groups in the State of Guatemala.

In closing, we urge you to consider our perspective as a genuine desire to build a true democratic State and of concern for all the actions that attempt against these efforts.

Cordially,

Misioneros de San Carlos Scalabrínianos – Casa del Migrante Guatemala – Asociación La Alianza - IDGT/Universidad Rafael Landívar – Mesa Nacional para las Migraciones en Guatemala MENAMIG – Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Sociales y Desarrollo INCEDES – Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial ECAP – Centro de Estudios de Guatemala -CEG-

