

<p>Lica. María Consuelo Porras Argueta Attorney General of Guatemala 15 avenida 15-16 zona 1, Barrio Gerona Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala via email: fiscalgeneralmp@gmail.com</p>	<p>Ministro-Embajador Pedro Brolo Vila Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2a Av. 4-17 zona 10 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala via US mail</p>
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January 19, 2021

Dear Attorney General Porras and Ministro-Embajado Brolo:

We are dismayed by the **harsh treatment of thousands of migrants**—including beatings with batons by police and military—**who crossed into Guatemala** last week in various caravans traveling north, many hoping to seek political asylum in Mexico or the United States. Preventing them from seeking asylum is a violation of international law.

The Instituto Guatemalteco de Migración (IGM) reported today that 2,504 migrants have been forced to return to Honduras and another 955 have been placed in immigration process with IGM. Of that total of 3,459 migrants, most are from Honduras (3,358), with 96 from El Salvador and five from Nicaragua. According to Guillermo Díaz, director general of IGM, between 7,000 and 8,000 migrants have crossed into Guatemala since last week.

Migrants are leaving Honduras by the thousands because of the harsh realities there. Honduras was badly affected by hurricanes Eta and Iota last November. The corona virus pandemic has crippled the economy. Food insecurity is real. Violent crime is high. Furthermore, well-documented and reported corruption by top level government officials leaves Hondurans with little faith that their government will improve conditions for them.

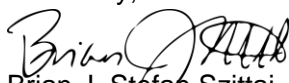
On January 16, about 2,000 migrants were slowed down by Guatemalan security forces near the village of Vado Hondo (just south of Chiquimula), located 35 miles (56 km) from border crossings into Honduras and El Salvador. A group of soldiers and police officers blockaded the two-lane highway, surrounded by a tall mountainside and a wall, leaving the migrants assembled there with few options. On January 17, hundreds of police and military forces surged forward, pushing migrants south along the highway and off the highway itself. Police launched teargas as troops with plastic shields closed in and used their batons to beat migrants. Journalists witnessed volunteer medics treating a migrant man with a bleeding head wound. Many sought medical attention for their injuries.

We realize that this group of migrants was overwhelming. We realize that Guatemala needs to protect its own citizens against the corona virus. Nevertheless, this show of force was excessive.

We strongly urge that you

- assess the police and military response to the migrant caravan and bring to justice any security personnel who used force that caused serious bodily injury to migrants
- work with neighboring countries to allow for the safe passage of migrants through your country who journey to pursue their internationally-recognized right to apply for political asylum in Mexico or the United States

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators


Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Sr. Guillermo Castillo Reyes, Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala ~ via email
Guillermo Díaz, Director General del IGM (Instituto Guatemalteco de Migración) ~ via email, US mail
Alfonso José Quiñónez Lemus, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via email, US mail
OAS/OEA: Ambassador Rita Claverie de Sciolti, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the Organization of American States in WDC ~ via email and US mail
IAHCR: Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
OACNUDH: Mika Kanervavuori, Representante de la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala ~ via email
US State Department: Guatemala Desk ~ via email
US Embassy: William Popp, Ambassador of the US to Guatemala, c/o of Mary Nameth, human rights officer ~ via email
NISGUA ~ via email
Guatemala Human Rights Commission-USA ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: