

Nobel laureates call for respect for rule of law in Guatemala

We, the undersigned laureates of the Nobel Prize, express our grave concern over the recent developments occurring in Guatemala.

Guatemala's International Commission against Impunity (CICIG) has been recognized both nationally and internationally for its invaluable contribution to the struggle against corruption and impunity in Guatemala. The decision to terminate its mandate, and the expulsion of Commissioner Iván Velásquez Gómez and his team—despite the Constitutional Court's vote to maintain the Commission—sets a dangerous precedent for Guatemala, and deeply compromises the independence of the judiciary, a cornerstone for peace and democracy.

Moreover, the recent attempt to amend the National Reconciliation Law is another alarming and unacceptable development as it would provide amnesty to those convicted against the worst crimes committed during the Guatemala armed conflict, leave survivors vulnerable to further violence, and denigrate the dignity of the victims in their struggle for the pursuit of justice.

Through the 1996 Peace Accords, Guatemala achieved remarkable advances in the fight against impunity, human rights violations and crimes against humanity. However growing restrictions on fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and association, is moving Guatemala back in time. The ongoing criminalization of activists and Indigenous community leaders who defend their lands and territories from mining extraction projects, hydroelectric projects, among others, demonstrates the degree of impunity prevailing in Guatemala.

Human rights defenders, including fellow Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum, face huge risks. In 2018, 26 human rights defenders —most of them Indigenous activists— were killed. Between 2015 and 2016, 231 attacks were registered against women human rights defenders in Guatemala, most of them land and natural resources defenders.

Elected officials have also been subjected to state harassment, as is the case with the recent intrusion in the offices of opposition members of Congress of the Republic of Guatemala. As well, on March 8, the offices of the “Women's Sector” —a national alliance of 33 women's organizations— were raided and documents stolen, part of a growing trend to repress and intimidate social movements and individuals working for justice in Guatemala.

In light of this severe democratic crisis, we urge the State of Guatemala to:

- Guarantee the rule of law, by respecting the judicial independence of the Constitutional Court and the respect of all democratic institutions;
- Provide all necessary guarantees for the CICIG to operate fully and independently;
- Guarantee the freedom of expression, opinion, peaceful assembly and association of all Guatemalan citizens, as well as full protection for victims of human rights violations and human rights defenders, particularly those from Indigenous communities; and
- Veto any further attempt to restore impunity through amendments to the National Reconciliation Law.

The people of Guatemala have endured enormous hardship to safeguard their fundamental rights. We urge Guatemala and the international community to uphold the principles of Guatemala's Constitution, and ensure peace and democracy prevail.

Signed:

Name	Category	Prize Year
Peter Agre	Chemistry	2003
Philip W. Anderson	Physics	1977
Barry Clark Barish	Physics	2017
Elizabeth H. Blackburn	Medicine	2009
William C. Campbell	Medicine	2015
Martin Chalfie	Chemistry	2008
Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio	Literature	2008
Mairead Maguire	Peace	1976
Shirin Ebadi	Peace	2003
Gerhard Ertl	Chemistry	2007
Andrew Z. Fire	Medicine	2006
Edmond H. Fischer	Medicine	1992
Leymah Roberta Gbowee	Peace	2011
Sheldon Glashow	Physics	1979
Oliver Hart	Economics	2016
Leland H. Hartwell	Medicine	2001
Harald zur Hausen	Medicine	2008
Richard Henderson	Chemistry	2017
Roald Hoffmann	Chemistry	1981
Tim Hunt	Medicine	2001
Louis J. Ignarro	Medicine	1998

Elfriede Jelinek	Literature	2004
Tawakkul Karman	Peace	2011
Roger D. Kornberg	Chemistry	2006
J. Michael Kosterlitz	Physics	2016
Finn E. Kydland	Economics	2004
John C. Mather	Physics	2006
Paul L. Modrich	Chemistry	2015
Alice Munro	Literature	2013
Roger B. Myerson	Economics	2007
Edmund S. Phelps	Economics	2006
Jose Ramos-Horta	Peace	1996
Sir Richard J. Roberts	Medicine	1993
Jean-Pierre Sauvage	Chemistry	2016
Vernon L. Smith	Economics	2002
Thomas C. Sudhof	Medicine	2013
Jack W. Szostak	Medicine	2009
Joseph H. Taylor Jr.	Physics	1993
Rigoberta Menchu Tum	Peace	1992
J. Robin Warren	Medicine	2005
Arieh Warshel	Chemistry	2013
Torsten N. Wiesel	Medicine	1981
Jody Williams	Peace	1997
Robert Woodrow Wilson	Physics	1978