



Hon. Rob Nicholson  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
515-S Centre Block  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

April 21, 2015

Honourable Minister Nicholson,

We are writing on behalf of the Americas Policy Group (APG) of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC), a Canadian civil society policy group made up of 40 international development and humanitarian NGOs, human rights groups, labour unions, research institutions, churches and solidarity groups. We have a long history of working with civil society partners in the Americas, monitoring the human rights situation and articulating joint policy positions on development, socio-economic issues and human rights in the region.

We are writing to express our concern that the mandate of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG, in Spanish) may not be renewed by the government of Guatemala. The mandate of the CICIG is currently set to expire in September, and information circulating in the Guatemalan press indicates that President Otto Perez Molina will be making a decision about its fate imminently. **We hope that Canada will use its strong relationship with Guatemala to urgently push for the Guatemalan government to renew the mandate of the CICIG without any modification, echoing calls by the US Government, the Guatemalan Human Rights Convergence and multiple civil society organizations.**

In Guatemala, impunity is still widespread for crimes of the past, feeding into the current impunity rates for crimes committed today. In order to address the situation of impunity in Guatemala, civil society organizations, particularly human rights organizations, urged for the creation of an international commission that would investigate and prosecute illegal groups operating within or in parallel to the State apparatus. This initiative led to the creation of the CICIG in 2006. Implemented under the coordination of the United Nations, it has provided much needed support to the country's public prosecutor, the National Civilian Police and other judicial institutions of the State. Since its creation, the mandate of the CICIG has been renewed three times, each time for two years (in 2009, 2011 and 2013), with ongoing and substantial contributions from the government of Canada.

On a number of recent occasions, President Otto Perez Molina has voiced his opposition to the renewal of the CICIG's mandate. Nonetheless, there has been significant pressure on the government to accept it from a wide diversity of actors, both national and international. Under such pressure, there is a risk that the Guatemalan government moves toward accepting the CICIG, but with core changes to its original mandate which could effectively render it powerless. For this reason, it is important that pressure to extend CICIG be coupled with ensuring it keeps its original mandate.

In order for Guatemala to develop strong and independent democratic institutions, we believe that financial and political support for security initiatives in Guatemala should address the root causes of impunity in Guatemala. The CICIG has proved itself to be one of the most effective tools in doing this. Canada's continued political and financial support for CICIG is therefore invaluable.

Yours sincerely,



Tara Ward  
*Co-Chair, Americas Policy Group*



Jim Hodgson  
*Co-Chair, Americas Policy Group*

Cc:

Paul Dewar, Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party  
Marc Garneau, Foreign Affairs Critic, Liberal Party of Canada  
Stuart Savage, Ambassador to Guatemala