

# IRTF

## InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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**Lica. María Consuelo Porras Argueta**  
Attorney General of Guatemala  
via email: [fiscalgeneralimp@gmail.com](mailto:fiscalgeneralimp@gmail.com)

June 26, 2021

Dear Attorney General Porras:

We are deeply concerned about the **amendments to Bill 5257**, a law governing the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), that went into effect on June 21, following the Guatemalan Constitutional Court's (CC) denial of legal appeals against the amendments. The revised law will create an even more hostile environment for those working to defend human rights. The law seeks to silence public criticism that may threaten the state's power, thereby perpetuating schemes of corruption and impunity.

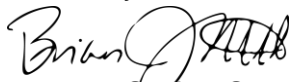
The revised law is troubling because it gives authority to the Guatemalan government to permanently close any NGO if its activities are deemed to be in violation of the "public order." This power could be used to violate NGOs' constitutional right to free expression when they criticize actions taken by the state, and their right to assembly/association if they organize public protests. These amendments also present overly burdensome requirements for NGOs that could bar groups with limited resources from registering, disproportionately impacting indigenous and rural organizations.

We echo the call by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR) and its Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression to "revoke these reforms that restrict public space, contradict freedom of association, freedom of expression and disproportionately make more difficult political participation and the defense of human rights."

We strongly urge that your government

- allow civil society organizations to proceed with legal challenges to the Bill 5257 amendments
- monitor the impacts of the implementation of these Bill 5257 amendments
- ultimately repeal the Bill 5257 amendments

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Alfonso José Quiñónez Lemus, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ email, US mail  
IAHCR: Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail  
OACNUDH: Mika Kanervavuori, Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala (OACNUDH)~ via email  
US State Department: Guatemala Desk in Washington, DC  
US State Department: William Popp, US Ambassador to Guatemala, in care of human rights officer Sarahann Yeh ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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