





- National
- World
- Business
- Interviews
- Lifestyle
- Democracy at Risk 
- Opinion 
- Submit Op-ed

Home > Opinion

As Coup in Guatemala Unfolds, US Must Act Quickly to Prevent Human Rights Crisis



by Liza Grandia — January 14, 2019 in Opinion



Recommended



Winter Weather Killed 15 Displace Childrer



Guatemalan Maya leaders take part in a protest against President Jimmy Morales on Monday. Photo: Orlando Estrada, AFP

32
SHARES

Share on Facebook

Share on Twitter



Jakelin Caal, one of two Guatemalan children who [died in December in U.S. border patrol custody](#), came from a village outside of Raxruhá in Guatemala’s lowlands, which means “the river runs blue” in her native Q’eqchi’ Mayan language. Once a sleepy hamlet of subsistence farmers, it is now a rambling frontier town controlled by armed narcos. They are the latest villains enabled by U.S. intervention in Guatemala to satisfy our *gringo* addictions for coffee, hamburgers, cars, cocaine, junk food, and gold.

A coup is



Guatemala’s President Jimmy Morales. Photo: AFP

unfolding in Guatemala. Last week, President **Jimmy Morales** [expelled a UN human rights team](#) that

in Syria:
UN



JANUARY
15, 2019



German Security Agency Steps Up Watch of Far-Right AfD



JANUARY
15, 2019



Snap Election in Israel: Just in Time to Save Netanyahu's Seat?



JANUARY
15, 2019



As Coup in Guatem: Unfolds, US Must Act

investigated corruption. He then tried to impeach three supreme court justices who [ruled his actions unconstitutional](#). With support from shadowy military and financial interest, an emboldened Morales asserted that he will re-open mines, hydroelectric, and other export projects stalled by [environmental and social protests](#).

Should the U.S. permit this coup to continue, many more will [flee Guatemala](#) for political asylum. What goes around comes around. In fact, right before the [CIA overthrew Guatemala's first democratically elected government](#) in 1954, it coined the term “blowback” to describe the [negative repercussions](#) that might drift back to the United States. [Jakelin's Q'eqchi' people](#) also have a single eloquent word for “you reap what you sow:” *q'oq'onk*.

Overthrowing Guatemala's Government

Until the mid-20th-century, Raxruhá was a forest haven for Q'eqchi' peasants fleeing brutal serf labor on coffee plantations. Guatemala's first democratically elected president **Jacobo Arbenz** tried to redistribute idle coffee plantation land to peasant farmers like Jakelin's grandfather. But the [CIA overthrew President Arbenz in 1954](#) as an alleged communist threat. Instead of land reform, CIA agents advised their puppet military government to build roads into the rainforest for colonization by landless peoples.

Following behind Q'eqchi' peasants, cattle ranchers began converting lowland rainforests to extensive pastures to

Quickly to Prevent Human Rights Crisis



JANUARY 14, 2019



Accident Opioid Overdoses More Likely to Kill You in US Than Motor Vehicle Crash



JANUARY 14, 2019



LA Teachers Begin Strike, Calling Attention to National Funding Issues



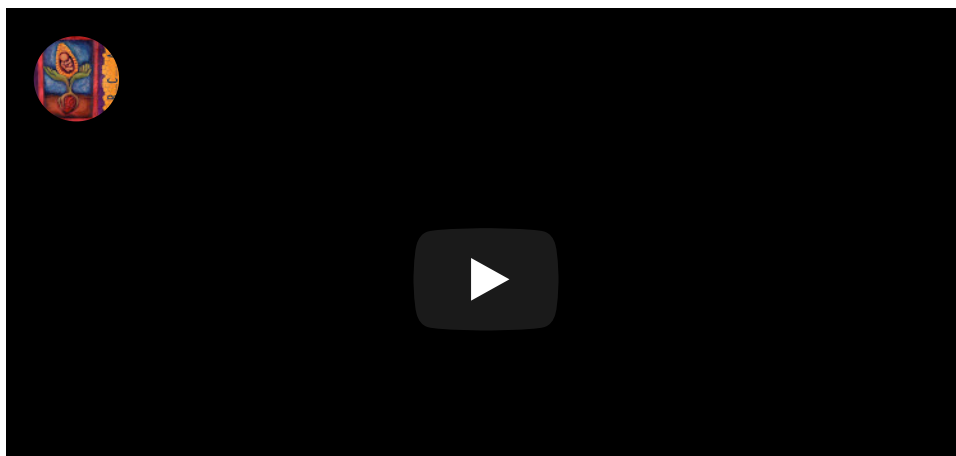
JANUARY 14, 2019

export cheap beef for U.S. fast food. In 1975, a U.S. oil company struck oil 30 miles from Raxruhá. Along a new highway and pipeline cut through Q'eqchi' territory, more politicians and military officers grabbed land. It became one of the focal regions of genocide during the 1980s. With tacit approval and military aid from the **Ronald Reagan's** administration, the [Guatemalan military massacred 600 indigenous villages](#), including many around Raxruhá.

Narco Traffickers Take Over

Then in the early 2000s, narco-traffickers moved into poor towns like Raxruhá. They belong to the [Zetas drug cartel](#) founded by rogue special force agents once trained by the U.S. military in counter-insurgency techniques.

After the Cold War, some became security for the Gulf Cartel and then formed their own narco ring which re-entered Guatemala through Q'eqchi' territory. As a money laundering cover, they have expanded cattle ranching and palm plantations (producing oil for our cosmetics and junk food). Throughout Q'eqchi' territory, villages like Jakelin's are fighting nickel mines, sugar cane plantations, oil pipelines and refineries, and hydroelectric dams.



Opinion

Snap Election in Israel: Just in Time to Save Netanyahu Seat?



JANUARY
15, 2019

As Coup in Guatem: Unfolds, US Must Act Quickly to Prevent Human Rights Crisis



JANUARY
14, 2019

Seven Ways to Pay for

Before these transnational interests seized Q'eqchi' homelands, families like Jakelin's would never have dreamed of [emigrating](#). Humble, hardworking, adaptable, and resilient people, they would much prefer to farm maize and beans on small homesteads in the rainforest than go north. I have lived in many Q'eqchi' villages. Until about a decade ago, I only knew of one person with a relative in the U.S., but today those same places are losing dozens upon dozens of their young people.

Crackdown

Those who stay and try to [defend their territory](#) are often [killed](#). Last year, seven grassroots environmental defenders were murdered in one month alone, including a Q'eqchi' leader, **Luis Arturo Marroquin**. Despite the risks of a crackdown, [tens of thousands](#) of peasants and indigenous people are blocking roads today across Guatemala to protest the [unfolding coup](#). A Q'eqchi' friend just messaged me: "Yes, we are out against these corrupt clowns in power."

If Guatemala becomes another Honduras from which [caravans of migrants](#) began to flee after its 2009 coup, Congress should immediately stop all aid to the Guatemalan government and especially to its military and condition reinstatement of those funds on the U.N.'s safe return to work. They should also support H.R. 7314, the [Guatemala Rule of Law Accountability Act](#), to block the assets and deny visas of Guatemalan officials and business

Border
Wall
and
End US
Governr
Shutdow



JANUARY

14, 2019

National
Emerger
Over
Wall
Funding
Not So
Fast Mr.
Trump,
Where's
the
Fire?



JANUARY

14, 2019

United
States
Econom
Beguilin
Calm
Period
Before
Proverbi
Storm?



JANUARY

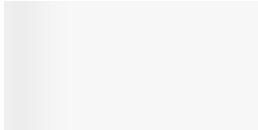
10, 2019

Trump's

elites accused of corruption or human rights abuses.

In little Jakelin's memory, the U.S. must act quickly to prevent Guatemala from descending into a human rights crisis.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of The Globe Post.



Prime-Time Oval Office Speech is Debasen of Hallowe Traditio



JANUARY 10, 2019

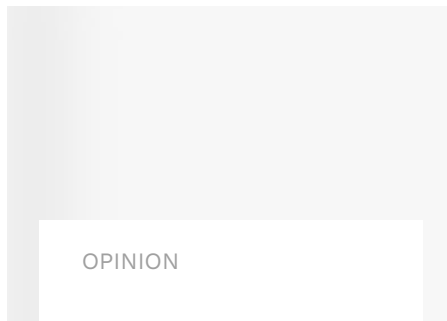
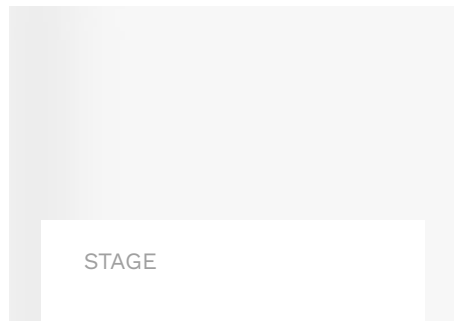
 Share 13
  Tweet 8
 



Liza Grandia

Cultural anthropologist and Associate Professor of Native American Studies at University of California-Davis. Grandia is the author of 'Enclosed: Conservation, Cattle, and Commerce among the Q'eqchi' Maya Lowlanders' and other books, reports, films and village publications about the repeated dispossession of Q'eqchi' lands

Related Posts



An Immigrant's Perspective on How to Fight Racism in America

by Saadia Khan

🕒 JANUARY 10, 2019

Lessons from Mexico for Central American Development

by Benjamin Waddell

🕒 DECEMBER 28, 2018

OPINION

Trump's Obsession with Border Wall Has Little to Do With Immigration Control

by Douglas Massey

🕒 DECEMBER 21, 2018

FEATURED

Border Control Hasn't Kept Determined Migrants Out and Neither Will Trump's Wall

by Wayne A. Cornelius

🕒 DECEMBER 20, 2018

OPINION

Denmark's Plan to Move 'Unwanted' Migrants to Island Might Become Reality

WORLD

Maya Women's Rights Activist Murdered in Guatemala

by Staff Writer

🕒 SEPTEMBER 22, 2018

by Edward Koning

🕒 DECEMBER 12, 2018



FACEBOOK



TWITTER

Newsletter

Do you like our reporting?

SUBSCRIBE

About Us



The Globe Post is part of Globe Post Media, a U.S. digital news organization that is publishing the world's best targeted news sites.

Submit Op-Ed

© 2018 The Globe Post