



# MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS

## *Peace, Social Justice and Integrity of Creation*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns Statement on Guatemalan Elections Crisis**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns stands with the Guatemalan people, condemning the Guatemalan Public Ministry’s judicial meddling in the country’s presidential elections. The will of the Guatemalan people, expressed at the ballot box, must be respected.

On June 25, Bernardo Arévalo of Guatemala’s Semilla party shocked the country’s political establishment by coming in second place in first-round presidential elections, qualifying for an August 20 runoff against first-place candidate Sandra Torres. But on July 12, the Public Ministry, Guatemala’s corruption-addled attorney general’s office, announced it was revoking Semilla’s legal status, citing an unsubstantiated accusation of voter registration fraud. Guatemala’s electoral law forbids the government from revoking a party’s legal status after participation in the election process.

Thousands of Guatemalans peacefully took to the streets demanding that Semilla’s legal status be restored. On the evening of July 13<sup>th</sup>, the Constitutional Court overturned the Public Ministry’s action and securing Semilla’s participation in the August runoff. Public Ministry officials responded that they would continue to investigate Semilla, as armed and masked Public Ministry agents raided the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, removing voter registration records.

Maryknoll Affiliates in Guatemala express concern that the Public Ministry will again attempt to disqualify Semilla before the inauguration on January 14, 2024, should Arévalo prevail in the August runoff. A [statement](#) from the Guatemalan Bishops Conference warns that “the immoral use of legal mechanisms becomes an instrument by which the State will destroy itself.”

Maryknoll missionaries have lived and worked alongside the Guatemalan people for 80 years, accompanying impoverished Indigenous communities through U.S.-backed coups, civil war, displacement, and persecution. They have witnessed the violence communities suffer when the people are excluded from decisions that impact their lives.

In recent years, a conglomeration of politicians, military forces, criminal organizations, and business leaders commonly referred to as the Pact of the Corrupt have systemically undermined the rule of law and institutionalized impunity in Guatemala, pursuing a campaign of persecution resulting in the exile of dozens of judges, prosecutors, and journalists who investigated corruption, appointing instead authorities who are themselves corrupt. The prosecutor who suspended Semilla’s legal status is one of many individuals on the U.S. State Department’s Engel List of corrupt actors. Arévalo and Semilla have campaigned on a commitment to root out corruption.

We stand with the Church and the Guatemalan people. We condemn the immoral judicial manipulation of the electoral process by the Public Ministry. We urge President Biden and members of the United States Congress to join the [chairs of the House and Senate](#) committees for foreign relations in condemning these actions and calling on the Guatemalan government to respect the will of voters, ensure the participation of Semilla in the August elections, and transfer power to the winner on January 14 without further hinderance.

*The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missionaries, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missionaries serve.*

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