

Rights Action

info@rightsaction.org • www.rightsaction.org • www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org • [Twitter.com/RightsAction](https://twitter.com/RightsAction)

September 2019

The violence, evictions and impoverishment of the global economic order are 'political persecution' The U.S., Canada & 'international community' helping produce forced migrancy flight from Honduras & Guatemala

There is no end in sight as to why tens of thousands of Hondurans and Guatemalans will continue to flee home and country, year after year. In 2018-2019, the numbers spiked to 100s of thousands.

one might find, receiving no public benefits, living in fear of jail and deportation, are better life options than the conditions that Hondurans and Guatemalans are forced to flee

Matching Donor: A supporter will match (up to \$25,000) tax-deductible donations made to Rights Action before Sept. 30, 2019.

People anywhere would leave all behind for the same reasons:

- unchecked government and private sector violence against the general population, and against human rights, environmental and land defenders;
- inter-generational exploitation, poverty and destitution;
- infiltration of organized crime (including drug-trafficking) into all branches of the state and government (executive, legislative, judiciary, military, police);
- close to complete impunity for the wealthy and powerful sectors (national and international) when they commit crimes and violate human rights.

Living without legal documentation in the U.S. or Canada, cut off from family and friends, taking whatever underpaid job

Mediterranean Blue

Naomi Shihab Nye-1952-

If you are a child of a refugee, you do not sleep easily when they are crossing the sea on small rafts and you know they can't swim. My father couldn't swim either. He swam through sorrow, though, and made it to the other side on a ship, pitching his old clothes overboard at landing, then tried to be happy, make a new life. But something inside him was always paddling home, clinging to anything that floated—a story, a food, or face. They are the bravest people on earth right now, don't dare look down on them. Each mind a universe swirling as many details as yours, as much love for a humble place. Now the shirt is torn, the sea too wide for comfort, and nowhere to receive a letter for a very long time.

And if we can reach out a hand, we better.

(continued)

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS:

Make checks payable to "Rights Action" and mail to the appropriate US or Canadian office.

CANADA
(Box 552)
351 Queen St. E
Toronto ON
M5A 1T8

UNITED STATES
Rights Action
Box 50887
Washington, DC
20091-0887

CREDIT CARD DONATIONS
Canada and U.S.
www.rightsaction.org/donate/

DONATIONS OF STOCK
Contact info@rightsaction.org

BOARD Canada & U.S.

James MacDonald
Wayne Rosen
Grahame Russell
Merran Smith
Paul Magno
Freddie Schrider

FULL-TIME STAFF

Grahame Russell

PART-TIME

Matthew Simpson
Scott Wright

GET INFORMED/ GET INVOLVED

Speakers: Invite us to give presentations in your community about these issues

Educational Delegations:

Form your own group or join one of our educational-solidarity delegation seminars to Guatemala and Honduras to learn more about these issues and struggles

Daily News:

- www.democracynow.org
- www.theintercept.com
- www.rabble.ca

Receive e-Newsletter:

www.rightsaction.org

[www.facebook.com/
rightsaction.org](https://www.facebook.com/rightsaction.org)



Media & 'experts' not reporting on complicity of the U.S., Canada & 'international community'

The mainstream media in Canada and U.S. have been reporting on the huge numbers of Hondurans and Guatemalans trying to cross Mexico and enter the U.S. to apply for asylum or residency, or to slip into society and get any jobs they might find. Media coverage divides generally into two camps.

One camp focuses (sometimes quite movingly) on the suffering of forced migrants:

- they had to flee “gang violence” (the most common explanation provided);
- they suffer harsh conditions crossing Mexico and attempting entry into the U.S.—many are killed, suffer violence, die of hunger and dehydration;
- children are illegally and very harmfully separated from parents;
- many forced migrants are now (many illegally) detained in U.S. jails and ‘temporary-becoming-permanent’ detention centers and jails, or living precariously in makeshift refugee camps in Mexico.

This camp argues that all migrants and asylum deserve humane treatment and a legal process for being able to stay in the U.S., or have their petitions denied.

The second media camp vociferously and sometimes racistly denigrates the forced migrants as criminals, rapists, gang members, people coming to steal jobs from U.S. citizens, etc. This camp encourages all measures to physically keep forced migrants out of the U.S., or to criminalize, jail and then deport those who enter the U.S.



Recently, a few media outlets have reported on how “climate change” is devastating parts of Guatemala and Honduras, particularly in the ‘dry corridor’ that passes through both countries, and how this also is forcing impoverished and desperate people to flee home and country. (“Hunger driving migration in drought-hit Central America: U.N.”, by Anastasia Moloney, August 14, 2019, www.reuters.com)

Yet it is astonishing to read, month after month, reports about the forced migrancy situation and not read a single commentary about how the U.S. and Canadian governments and other actors in the ‘international community maintain full and beneficial economic, political and military relations with the very regimes in Guatemala and Honduras responsible for the conditions forcing people to flee.

It is astonishing to read about “climate change” worsening the ‘now-permanent-crisis-situation’ in Central America, with no commentary about the underlying political and economic causes of it.



Community defense struggles – versus – the global economy

Since 1995 in Guatemala and 1998 in Honduras, Rights Action has been funding and working with land, human rights and environmental defenders resisting forced evictions, human rights violations and environmental harms caused by different sectors of the global economy in partnership with corrupt and repressive governments, military and police in both countries.

Every one of these struggles is related directly to why Hondurans and Guatemalans are forced to flee home and country, year after year.

Chixoy dam

For over 15 years, Rights Action supported victim-survivors of the 1982 Chixoy dam massacres that killed over 440 people from the Mayan Achi village of Rio Negro, forcibly evicted 32 communities and, since then, devastated living habitats and the environment along and around the Chixoy river. This ‘economic development project’ repression was carried out by the U.S.-backed military regimes of generals Lucas Garcia and Rios Montt in partnership with the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank – the principal investors in the Chixoy dam project. No justice was done for the atrocities caused by this “economic development” project. The World Bank and IDB—that profited from their investments—avoided any political and legal accountability for the death and destruction they caused.

Mining

Since 2005, Rights Action has supported Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities suffering and resisting forced evictions, killings and repression, environmental and health harms linked to Canadian and U.S. companies: Goldcorp Inc. in Guatemala and Honduras; Aura Minerals in Honduras; Hudbay Minerals/ Skye Resources/ INCO in Guatemala; Tahoe Resources/ Pan American Silver in Guatemala; KCA/Radius Gold in Guatemala. Investors in these mines include: U.S. and Canadian pension funds, shareholders, private investors, trusts, endowments, the World Bank, etc.

Except for the landmark Hudbay Minerals and recently settled Tahoe Resources/ Pan American Silver lawsuit, working their ways through Canadian courts, no justice or accountability has been done in Honduras, Guatemala, Canada or the U.S. for any mining-caused violence and killings, harms and evictions.

Tourism

Since before the U.S. and Canadian-backed military coup in Honduras in 2009, and worsening considerably since then, tourism investors from Canada and the U.S. have used corruption, violence and forced evictions to get control of lands of the Indigenous Garifuna people, to then build condos and holiday enclaves for North American and European tourists.

Dams

Beyond the Chixoy dam massacres and destruction, Rights Action has supported other communities in Guatemala and Honduras suffering and resisting evictions and repression caused by internationally-financed dam projects. The most known struggle is that of the Lenca people in western Honduras resisting evictions, repression and criminalizations due to the Agua Zarca

(continued)

Summary of your donations at work (June 24, 2019):
<https://rightsaction.org/your-donations-at-work>

dam that resulted in the assassination of Berta Caceres and attempted killing of Gustavo Castro. The trial against the 'material authors' of Berta's assassination and shooting of Gustavo Castro goes painstakingly forward. To date, no justice has been done whatsoever for the 'intellectual authors'—the Honduran economic and political elites who planned and paid for the assassination team.

African palm & sugarcane

Since 2010 in the Aguan region of northern Honduras, and Polochic region of eastern Guatemala, Rights Action has provided emergency funding to family members of people killed and evicted by wealthy elites using military, police and hired gun violence to take their lands for the expanded production of African palm and sugar cane. The demand for both has spiked as food products and as a source of "green energy" biofuels. The World Bank is a major investor/profiteer.

The global economy: Exporting consumer products and desperate people

The oppression and violence of the global economic model can be seen most stunningly in the 'for-export' production of African palm, sugar cane, cotton, cattle-for-meat, bananas and pineapples.

Hundreds of thousands of acres of Guatemala's and Honduras's richest lands—mainly lowlands with access to fresh water year round—are controlled by the ruling elites and foreign interests, and used to produce 'for-export' consumer products at the very same time as caravans of desperately poor, landless people are forcibly exported.

There is no dry season, there is no drought in the 'for-export' sectors of the global economy that produce mono-culture products year round.

As priority policy, the U.S. and Canadian governments and other 'international community' actors support—via "free trade" agreements, government "aid" programs, World Bank and IMF loans, etc.—the endless expansion of global corporate and investor interests in all these sectors of the economy, ignoring or denying allegations of human rights violations, forced evictions, crimes and other harms; ignoring how these sectors of the global economy control (oftentimes violently and illegally) the best lands of both countries, forcing impoverished campesinos onto dry, uncultivable lands.

"Shithole countries"

During a January 2018 meeting the U.S., president Trump said: "Why do we want all these people from 'shithole countries' coming here?"

While the president's denigrating, racist comments were denounced, in many ways this is how the U.S., Canada and other 'international community' actors treat the majority populations and environments of Honduras and Guatemala. For global companies and investors, Honduras and Guatemala are places where:

- they can exploit very cheap, non-unionized labor, while paying virtually no benefits at all;
- they can have entire communities evicted from their homes and lands;
- they can pay little to no attention to environmental or human rights standards;
- they know that if they harm the environmental or violate rights, there is virtually no way to hold them accountable.



Global economy at work in the Lote 8

Surviving members of the Mayan Q'eqchi' community of Lote 8 gather for this photo by James Rodriguez (mimundo.org). In 2007, Lote 8 was burnt to the ground, twice; animals and personal property of value were stolen by Guatemalan police and military working together with private security hired by Skye Resources (that amalgamated with Hudbay Minerals in 2008), as part of illegal, violent evictions requested by the mining company. During the second of these violent incursions, 11 village women were gang-raped by the police, soldiers and private security guards.

Since this time, only a few villagers have been able to re-build their homes in Lote 8, given that the open-pit, mountaintop removal mining operation - now owned by the Swiss company Solway Investment Group - is devastating the entire mountain range above the town of El Estor, and moving closer to Lote 8. While the 11 gang-rape victims live in poverty, away from their land, and are pursuing the landmark "Hudbay Minerals" lawsuits in Canadian courts, a number of Lote 8 villagers are living without documentation in the U.S., having lost everything and fled home and country.

Captive labor: No human rights, environmental or labor standards, No mobility

Companies, investors, countries and persons involved in the production, export and consumption of these products from Honduras and Guatemala are, directly or indirectly, contributing to and benefiting from some of the reasons why people are forced to flee home and country.

In many ways, what is happening in Honduras and Guatemala is a blatant form of race-to-the-bottom-capitalism. In Honduras and Guatemala, the brutalized, evicted and destitute are not even allowed to "take their labor" and go elsewhere.

When forced to flee home and country in search of a bare minimum peaceful and subsistence life, they are "criminalized", jailed, and forced home to the same conditions that forced them to flee.

Connecting the dots: Military coups, 'for-export' production and forced migrancy

To complete the picture, this unjust global economic order is kept in place by undemocratic, corrupt, violent governments in Honduras and Guatemala that have been put and/or kept in place to large degree by the government of the U.S. and Canada and other "international community" actors.

On June 27, 1954, Jacobo Arbenz—president of Guatemala's last truly democratic government—was forced from office during a U.S. orchestrated military coup against his government.

(continued)



“Glorious Victory” is Mexican painter Diego Rivera’s mural depicting the 1954 U.S. coup that ousted the government of President Arbenz. In the foreground, CIA director Allen Dulles shakes the hand of coup “leader” (selected by the U.S.) Colonel Castillo Armas. Allen Dulles’ left hand rests on a bomb with the face of President Dwight Eisenhower. Behind Allen, brother John Foster Dulles, head of the State Department, and John Peurifoy, Ambassador to Guatemala, hand out cash to Guatemalan military commanders. A Catholic priest officiates over the killing of Mayans and other poor Guatemalans, while exploited workers carry United Fruit Company bananas.

On June 28, 2009, Mel Zelaya—president of Honduras’ last democratically elected government—was forced out of the country in a military coup legitimized and supported by the U.S. and Canada.

HONDURAS 10 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

2009 - 2019

10 YEARS OF THE US AND CANADA-BACKED COUP IN HONDURAS



Depicted here, Berta Caceres the widely respected Indigenous rights, anti-patriarchy, anti-imperialist, Mother Earth defender and organizer. Berta was assassinated March 2, 2016 by sectors of Honduras’ economic and military elites with links to the president’s office. Depicted here also is Edwin Espinal, who was—yes, it is true!—recently released from his illegal detention. For over 18 months, Edwin was held as a political prisoner in a max-security military jail, “awaiting trial” on a laundry list of trumped up charges. After a courageous struggle, Edwin was finally released, though he still has to go “to trial” to confront the trumped up charges! (*Image: Honduras Solidarity Network*)

June 27, 1954 and June 28, 2009, mark the ends of short periods of peaceful, democratic governments that were actually implementing necessary economic, land, political and social reforms—more broadly in Guatemala, 1944-1954, less so in Honduras, 2005-2009.

These ‘regime change’ dates mark the violent return of “open for global business” policies benefiting multinational companies and investors in the sectors of sugarcane and African palm, bananas and pineapple, mining and privatized hydro-electric dams, tourism and “sweatshop” garment factories.

These dates mark a return to extreme exploitation in each of these sectors of the economy whose operations are characterized by evictions, human rights violations and repression.

Connecting the dots: “Democratic allies” in illegal regime change efforts in Venezuela

Not only are Honduras and Guatemala profitable places for global companies and banks, not only are the U.S. and Canadian governments responsible—directly and indirectly—for the military coups that brought back to power corrupt, repressive, pro-global business regimes in both countries, but over the past two years Guatemala and Honduras (along with other repressive, corrupt governments) are considered “democratic allies” in support of the brazenly illegal

U.S. and Canadian-led efforts to economically strangle, isolate and overthrow Venezuela's government.



In many ways, this is where we are today. By design and operation, Guatemala and Honduras are violent, corrupt, refugee-producing countries. What is never addressed is the directly complicit role of the U.S., Canada and other actors in the 'international community'.

Fundamental inter-connectedness and co-responsibility

In Honduras and Guatemala, no matter how hard and courageously people work to have their human rights, lands rights and environments protected, to restore fair elections and real democracy, as long as their economic, political and military elites maintain beneficial, empowering relations with other governments and a host of 'international community' actors, these regimes will continue to manipulate or openly steal elections, and use repression, corruption and impunity to keep in place exploitative, violent economic models ... that force 10s of thousands of people to flee every year.

Work in support of refugees and forced migrants in the U.S. and Canada must continue:

- to ensure humane and legal treatment of all forced migrants and refugee claimants;
- to increase the numbers of forced migrants and refugees that the U.S. and Canada will accept, prioritizing people forced to flee dire situations of destitution, violence, corruption and oppression;
- to force open public and media discussion about the underlying causes of forced migrancy from countries like Honduras and Guatemala, and how our public and private sector policies oftentimes contribute to this;
- to hold our governments accountable for when their policies and actions in Honduras and Guatemala contribute to exploitation and destitution, violence and repression, corruption and impunity;
- to increase consumer awareness and accountability work so that Canadian and U.S. citizens take responsibility for where our imported consumer products come from, and in what conditions they are produced;
- to increase political and legal accountability work against our companies and investors when and where their business activities contribute to and profit from exploitation and destitution, repression, corruption and impunity.

"Economic migrants" are refugees

There is a long-overdue challenge to work related to forced migrancy and refugee rights. Repeatedly, one is told that "economic migrants" cannot apply for political asylum. Yet in many regions of the world, particularly in exploited, abused countries of the global south such as Honduras and Guatemala, the global economy is imposed illegally and violently on vast numbers of impoverished, destitute people.

Even before local citizens are targeted for repression (killings, attacks, "criminalizations", etcetera) by the government or powerful private interests because they are protesting exploitation, evictions and destitution, it is the economic exploitation and evictions themselves that are government and private sector sanctioned violence. The poverty and destitution that the global economy creates and forces people into are life-threatening violence.



Thank you for your trust in and support for Rights Action's work:

- funding community/ human rights/ environmental/ territorial defenders in Honduras and Guatemala, courageously resisting human rights violations and repression, and working every single day for a fair and just political, economic and social model;
- educating about the fundamental inter-connect- edness, local-to-global nature of these issues;
- chipping away at holding U.S. and Canadian governments, companies and investors account- able for how they contribute to and benefit from exploitation and environmental harm, repres- sion and violence, corruption and impunity in Honduras and Guatemala.

Please send comments and questions to Grahame Russell, grahame@rightsaction.org.

Act – Stir up the pot – Chip away

Call, write, act—stir up the pot. Keep sending copies of Rights Action information (and that of other solidarity groups/ NGOs) to family, friends and networks, politicians and media – always asking the question as to why our governments, companies and investment firms benefit from and turn a blind eye to poverty, repression and violence, environmental and health harms that caused the forced migrancy / refugee crisis in Guatemala and Honduras.

- U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>
- U.S. House: [https://www.house.gov/representatives/ find-your-representative](https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)
- Canadian Parliament: [https://www.ourcommons.ca/ Parliamentarians/en/members](https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members)

Please re-post and publish this information
Subscribe to e-Newsletter: www.rightsaction.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org
Twitter: [@RightsAction](https://twitter.com/RightsAction)



Box 50887
Washington, DC 20091-0887

PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
IM

