

**"MESSAGE FROM THE ORGANIZED WOMEN OF GUATEMALA TO THE WOMEN NOBEL
PEACE LAUREATES
WOMEN NOBEL PEACE LAUREATES: WOMEN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN
GUATEMALA"**

For us, the Guatemalan women—Mayan, Xinka, Afro-descendant, Garifuna, and Mestizo—organized in various groups and movements and defined by our diversity and plurality, it is extremely important to welcome the delegation of Nobel Peace Prize laureates at this critical juncture for the world, the Mesoamerican region, and our country.

Reflecting on our recent past—36 years of Internal Armed Conflict in Guatemala—we are deeply concerned about the current international context. The hegemony of the arms industry, the technology of death, and militarism are the seeds of wars, evident now in the genocide against Palestine and other territories. The competition for natural resources and global control by great powers is fueled by conservative mindsets resistant to change, seeking to deny our rights as women, our peoples' rights, and our political participation in all public and private spheres of daily life.

Despite the significant contributions of many women, particularly in our region, to sustain the web of life, build peace, and redefine protection and security, we face ongoing challenges. In a country where the consolidation of democratic spaces and efforts, the defense of body-land-nature, and the memory and history of women and peoples are crucial, these processes are under threat. In neighboring Mexico and Honduras, where two women have reached the presidency, entrenched power structures and conservative forces systematically work to undermine their governments and erode their credibility. Meanwhile, in Guatemala, as the Electoral and Political Parties Law is being reformed, women's organizations are striving to ensure parity, alternation, and inclusion of all peoples.

In Guatemala, the newly elected progressive government presents a historic opportunity to address the issues faced by women and their impact on our communities. However, hate speech and actions such as criminalization, dispossession, and eviction of territories—particularly in Alta Verapaz (Cobán, San José El Tesoro) and Izabal (El Estor, Tz'inté Community), where there have recently been two violent evictions of Q'echi' communities—persist, enabled by a justice system corrupted by impunity. Furthermore, structural problems like poverty, malnutrition, and social and labor insecurity continue to affect our daily lives.

We recognize that this historic opportunity with the new government will be pivotal in advancing the rights of women and our communities. We call for decisive action from the executive branch against the repression by the justice system, including the criminalization of human rights defenders, as well as justice officials who oppose corruption, journalists, students, and university professors. We are particularly concerned about the Public Prosecutor's Office's criminalization of indigenous and ancestral authorities and community leaders who have actively participated in recent

resistance movements and are now being persecuted and criminalized through false accusations.

We believe that the development model, which prioritizes mining, agribusiness, consumerism, and the interests of a privileged few, has significantly impacted women and the majority of Guatemala's population, who struggle with daily precariousness. Women, particularly indigenous communities, advocate and fight for a model based on equality, solidarity, and community harmony. They recognize the significant contributions of women, communities, and peoples to the country's economy and food production. However, this model, often portrayed as the norm, poses immense challenges for women's daily survival in all aspects of life. Despite contributing 20% to the GDP and a substantial amount of unrecognized and unpaid work, women continue to endure extremely adverse conditions.

THE CHALLENGES WOMEN ENCOUNTER

In Guatemala, women grapple with structural issues rooted in the country's history of colonization, the neoliberal model, and the patriarchal system. These systems are primarily manifested in racism and discrimination, which aim to divide us and impede the progress of our movements. Racism and discrimination primarily target indigenous and Afro-descendant women, as well as women with disabilities, young and elderly women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and migrant women. Addressing these issues requires specific affirmative actions tailored to these populations. Additionally, the dispossession of land caused by extractive industries exacerbates the situation, leading to the depletion of water resources, deforestation, monoculture farming, and displacement of entire communities. This disrupts social cohesion, cultural identity, worsens the climate crisis, and threatens food sovereignty.

Currently, given the structural nature of our challenges, we believe the most pressing issues impacting us are as follows:

- Violence and criminalization: Women across all spheres are experiencing violence and criminalization, particularly in the context of land evictions, leaving families, especially women and children, without housing, food, and livelihoods. This situation, which we term ethnocide, destroys the cultural framework, relationships, and social fabric painstakingly built by communities over time.
- Impoverishment and migration: Economic impoverishment is driving women to migrate from our territories, exposing them to great risks and violence during the journey, at borders, and at their destinations, where they face organized crime, human trafficking, and border authorities who disregard human rights.
- Food sovereignty obstacles: Ensuring food sovereignty is challenging due to various factors.
- Environmental corruption and crises: Environmental corruption leads to crises such as fires and other humanitarian emergencies.

- Health and education system precarity: The health and education systems are generally precarious, with indigenous women facing limited access to quality services that are culturally relevant.
- Lack of sex education: Limited access to sex education contributes to an increase in forced pregnancies among girls and adolescents.
- Obstacles for women with disabilities: Approximately 1,500,000 women with disabilities face challenges in accessing their social rights, including education, work, and political participation.
- Stagnation in Congress: Proposals benefiting women, children, youth, and indigenous peoples, including reforms to ensure gender parity, alternation, and indigenous inclusion in the Electoral and Political Parties Law, are stalled in Congress.
- Lack of culturally relevant education: There is a lack of access to education with cultural, territorial, and linguistic relevance.
- Judicial and systemic corruption: Corruption within the judicial system and other state institutions severely undermines justice, with reports of violence against women often dismissed, leaving them more vulnerable to their aggressors.
- Challenges in publicizing achievements and resistances: Our achievements, struggles, and resistance efforts often face obstacles in reaching wider audiences.
- Lack of economic resources: There is a lack of economic resources in daily life and to support collective initiatives.

Despite facing these and many other challenges on a daily basis, women persist in making significant efforts to protect ourselves and advance our rights. We celebrate our victories and the resilience of countless women who have fought for profound changes. As an opportunity arises, we also prepare ourselves to confront challenges and ensure our voices are heard.

OUR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NOBEL WOMEN'S DELEGATION

We express our appreciation for the efforts towards global peace and harmonious coexistence for all.

We ask this delegation to focus its efforts in particular on the following:

- Stand in solidarity with the complaint lodged by lawyers and human rights defenders in Guatemala before the International Criminal Court, seeking to prosecute former presidents and prosecutors of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

They are accused of criminalizing justice operators and shielding officials who infringe upon rights and democracy in Guatemala.

- Expose and condemn the co-optation of the justice system and institutions such as the Public Ministry, the Judiciary, the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and the National Assembly of Municipal Mayors by corrupt factions.
- Demand an end to licenses for extractive projects due to their adverse impact on the lives of women and children, as well as on the scarcity of water and other natural resources.
- Protest against eviction orders targeting rural, indigenous, and peasant communities, denouncing them as ethnocide.
- Highlight the urgent need for comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive rights, given the alarming statistics: 25,031 pregnant girls and adolescents (aged 10-19) in the country, with 900 of them under the age of 14. This continuum of violence is evident in the increasing cases of disappearances and sexual violations.
- Advocate for the autonomy of the University of San Carlos de Guatemala and demand its recovery, as this fundamental right is currently being restricted for youth. Additionally, call for an end to the repression, criminalization, and prosecution of students, faculty, and administrative staff.
- Assert the right of women to full and equal participation in decision-making processes at local and national levels, including Urban and Rural Development Councils, Municipalities, and Government Cabinets.
- Recognize and honor the significant role played by indigenous and ancestral authorities during the 106-day peaceful resistance, which took place between 2023 and early 2024, in defense of democracy in Guatemala. Thanks to this widespread movement, a transition of government was achieved.

Organizations' demands for dialogue with the Executive and other national and international advocacy platforms:

- Respect and empower women's and indigenous peoples' organizations, honoring their way of life, their connection with nature, and safeguarding their ancestral knowledge and resources.
- Uphold the rule of law, ceasing the persecution and criminalization of land and territory defenders, aligning actions with international human rights standards and indigenous and ancestral rights.

- Implement mechanisms and allocate public funds to eradicate racism and discrimination, which hinder access to education and basic rights, thus hindering a fulfilling life for communities and women.
- Prompt the President to take immediate action in healthcare and education, particularly emphasizing comprehensive sexuality education. Establish shelters and support centers for women lacking basic healthcare access or relevant assistance. Ensure that services cater to diverse needs, including those of people with HIV, chronic illnesses, and individuals who communicate in sign language or Mayan languages. Guarantee access to emergency contraception for women, particularly those who have experienced sexual violence during migration.
- Advocate in the Legislative Body for the approval of key laws such as Law 5452 for Women's Economic Development, Law 6136 for the Protection of Collective Intellectual Property of Indigenous Textiles, Law 6157 for Comprehensive Sexuality Education, and Law 5125 for Persons with Disabilities. Additionally, push for reforms to the Electoral and Political Parties Law to ensure inclusion, parity, and alternation in politics. These pending laws, vital for women's advancement, should be integrated into executive branch programs.
- Call upon the government to demonstrate commitment by engaging in dialogues or establishing specific mechanisms for women, ensuring their demands are incorporated into plans and programs with allocated public funding.
- Promote actions fostering land conservation, food sovereignty, climate change mitigation, women's economic and political empowerment, eradication of malnutrition, and the recognition and compensation of women's caregiving work.

In light of these considerations, we, the organizations represented, hereby subscribe and sign this document, June 2024.





UNAMG
UNION
NACIONAL DE
MUJERES
GUATEMALTECAS



Afrodescendant Women's Network
Garifuna Women's Association of Guatemala
National Garifuna and Afro-descendant Council
Resistance in defense of the Universidad de San Carlos de
Guatemala