

ISSUE BRIEF

Addressing Instability in Northern Central America: Restrictions on Civil Liberties, Violence, and Climate Change

SEPTEMBER 2021

MARÍA FERNANDA BOZMOSKI,
MARÍA EUGENIA BRIZUELA DE ÁVILA
WITH DOMINGO SADURNÍ

The Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center broadens understanding of regional transformations through high-impact work that shapes the conversation among policymakers, the business community, and civil society. The Center focuses on Latin America's strategic role in a global context with a priority on pressing political, economic, and social issues that will define the trajectory of the region now and in the years ahead. The Center's Central America programming has focused on providing insights, analysis, and galvanizing bipartisan support for sustainable solutions to the Northern Triangle's economic, rule of law, and security challenges. Past marquee work includes our 2017 Northern Triangle Security and Economic Opportunity Task Force, our 2020 Central America Economic Reactivation in a COVID-19 World report, and our ongoing 2021 work with the Northern Triangle Advisory Group. Other select lines of the Center's programming include: Venezuela's crisis; Mexico-US and global ties; China in Latin America; Colombia's future; a changing Brazil; Caribbean development; commercial patterns shifts; energy resources; and disinformation. Jason Marczak serves as Center Director.

DT Institute is a funder and implementer of peace and development projects. It focuses on co-creation and co-investment, as well as measurable impact and sustainability. DT Institute works with governments and our on-the-ground partners to address pressing issues—from conflict to economic crisis—and to establish a foundation for lasting stability, peace, and prosperity. It is in the organization's DNA to be bold: DT Institute relentlessly innovates, creates, and measures its ability to drive innovation, strengthen communities, develop the next generation of leaders, and positively impact the lives of those we serve.

INTRODUCTION

Citizens across Latin America and the Caribbean are rising up in protest. Political frustration and economic stagnation are fueling social discontent exacerbated by the continued COVID-19 pandemic and the slow health response. In Central America, restrictions on civil liberties, high rates of gender-based violence and extortion, and worsening climate change are compounding the lack of economic opportunities and pervasive corruption seen in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. In the year of its bicentennial, can northern Central America chart a new path, in partnership with the United States, to tackle the sources of social instability that are forcing migrants to seek a better life?

In July 2021, the Joseph Biden administration released the *US Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America* report. Three of its five pillars call for the United States and northern Central American countries to work together to respect human rights and a free press, counter violence at the hands of criminal organizations, and combat sexual and gender-based violence.¹ To ensure a sustained and effective implementation of this strategy, especially on these three pillars, the United States will need to find new ways to work closely with northern Central American governments, domestic and international private sectors, and organized civil-society groups.

Following consultations with the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center's Northern Triangle Advisory Group (NTAG), this brief highlights the importance

of implementing a holistic, multisector approach to mitigate gender-based violence, protect civil liberties and human rights, and build climate resilience. This brief is the third in a three-part series by the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center and DT Institute that provides policy recommendations for the United States and its northern Central American partners to address the root causes of migration.

I. PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OTHER CIVIL LIBERTIES

Persistent Challenges

In all three countries of northern Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), constraints on the freedom of the press and restrictions on civil-society organizations hamper citizens' rights to information and are fueling widespread discontent. According to Freedom House, the global freedom scores for Guatemala (52 out of 100), Honduras (44), and El Salvador (63) place them as "partly free countries," in stark contrast to other regional countries like Panama (83) and Costa Rica (91)—both considered "free" countries with widespread access to political rights and civil liberties.²

In Guatemala, legal experts and representatives from different sectors have expressed concern about reforms to a 2003 law to monitor civil society organizations.³ While few disagree with the law's objective of enhancing transparency in civil society organizations that receive public funds, the ambiguity in the language of the law on purported violations and the subsequent sanctions are concerning. There is also disagreement on *who* should be able to monitor funding for civil society groups and their operations and activities. Currently, these responsibilities fall within the Ministry of the Interior, which is under the purview of the executive branch.⁴ The United States and the United Nations have echoed similar fears about the reformed law, which gives the government wide discretionary powers to criminalize activists and civil society in general—and even to dissolve civil society organizations that the government considers a threat to national security, but without clearly delineating what activities may be punishable. As part of her visit to Guatemala in June 2021, US Vice President Kamala Harris condemned the law and asked Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei to "let civil society organizations do their job without obstacles."⁵ Although some organizations and activists are currently challenging the law in front of the Constitutional Court, the Guatemalan Ministry of the Interior published the bylaws in Guatemala's official gazette in August 2021.⁶ However, given the current challenges to the law,

some aspects of it, including dismantlement of civil society organizations on the grounds of alteration of public order and the need to register with the Ministry, are on hold.⁷ At the time of writing, there are no precedents or specific cases of the law being applied.

But these concerns are not unique to Guatemala. As circumstances in the three northern countries of Central America illustrate, threats to freedom of expression are regional. In El Salvador, President Nayib Bukele has undermined press freedoms by publicly attacking independent journalists. A special legislative commission to investigate harassment against journalists presented its findings and conclusions as part of its closing report in November 2020. The commission—which no longer exists in the 2021–2024 new Legislative Assembly, where President Bukele's party holds a two-thirds majority—determined that the executive branch is responsible for harassment and discrimination against journalists, as well as blocking critical outlets from access to public information.⁸ In one of the starkest examples of this campaign against journalists, in July 2021, President Bukele expelled Mexican journalist and editor Daniel Lizarraga of *El Faro*.Net after denying his work visa and residence permit.⁹ According to the government, Lizarraga was unable to prove his credentials as a journalist.¹⁰ This majority in the legislative branch allows the administration to more expediently pass legislation that could further curb the freedom of expression and press. It can also stall on discussing draft bills, as has been the case with the proposed 2017 Law for the Protection of Journalists.¹¹ The deteriorating environment for the press in El Salvador has not gone unnoticed by the international community. According to Reporters Without Borders, El Salvador has fallen sixty-six positions in the World Press Freedom Report since 2013, now occupying eighty-second place out of 180 ranked countries. And, although neighbors Guatemala (116) and Honduras (151) rank lower, El Salvador's drop is the largest the region.¹²

In Honduras, one of the deadliest countries in the Western Hemisphere, freedom of expression has continuously worsened since 2009, when former President Manuel Zelaya was forced to flee to Costa Rica in a coup d'état.¹³ From 2001 to 2020, eighty-five journalists have been killed in the country. Only sixteen perpetrators have been brought to court, and only five received sentences—illustrating the high level of impunity when killing journalists in the country.¹⁴ In fact, a 2021 Human Rights Watch report on Honduras lists journalists as the group most vulnerable to organized crime.¹⁵ Also, the Institute to Access Public Information (IAIP) has remained closed since March 2020, making it harder for journalists and civil society to access public information. And, in June 2020,

Honduras passed a new criminal code. Human Rights Watch and Honduras' Journalists Guild have criticized the vagueness in some provisions of the updated code, which could threaten the already-fragile freedoms of expression, association, and assembly.¹⁶ In all three countries, being a journalist or a civil-society representative is becoming increasingly difficult.

Past and Existing Efforts

Despite the situation, a broad range of civil society groups in northern Central America continue to work to address challenges to freedom of the press and freedom of expression. In Honduras, C-Libre, the Committee for Freedom of Expression, works to denounce violations committed by the state against journalists and civil society.¹⁷ Since 2011—and in response to the 2009 coup—C-Libre has done this by creating a network of journalists (Red de Alertas y Protección a Periodistas—RAPCOS). A main goal of the network is to monitor the state of freedom of expression, document violations to said freedom, and see any investigations through to completion. RAPCOS also works to raise awareness of the ongoing threats to civil liberties at the national and international levels. Importantly, C-Libre also works to contextualize the violations within current political and social events. It has an online portal and hotline to receive and process complaints. In November 2020, civil society organizations—including C-Libre—formally brought a complaint to the Public Ministry regarding arbitrary detentions and police aggression toward journalists covering COVID-19 in Honduras.¹⁸

Similarly, in El Salvador, organizations like TRACODA (Transparency, Social Comptroller, and Open Data Association) defend freedom of expression through the promotion of transparency, human rights, and technology by training youth and the media on data-collection methods. TRACODA is also behind GobData—an ecosystem of tools that facilitates any citizen's request for information from government at the national and local levels.¹⁹ With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the organization has also joined forces with FUSADES, a Salvadoran think tank, to train youth on the different functions of government institutions and how public resources are used, as well as to raise awareness about the corrosive effects of corruption in a democracy and offer training on existing civil-society-led tools to engage with citizen oversight.²⁰ Other organizations in the country, like Lab-Dat, also work on making data accessible for journalists and citizens, with the objective of enabling anyone to engage in consultations about draft bills and laws. Efforts like these are especially important at a time when the current administration in El Salvador attempts

to further restrict open access to public information through changes to thirteen articles of the Law of Access to Public Information.²¹

In Guatemala, civil society has sought to innovate in its protection of freedom of press and expression. In many cases, independent media outlets and groups of journalists join forces with each other, and with human rights organizations, to form regional alliances.²² Such is the case of *No-Ficción*, a collective of journalists with a national, regional, and international scope. This type of community journalism provides an additional layer of protection for journalists—especially in the unfortunate case that a member has no choice but to leave the country for safety reasons—and allows the information sharing and data processing that are crucial for in-depth investigations.²³ *Ojoconmipisto* also makes data accessible to all journalists. By tracking the use of public resources and closely monitoring procurement, the work of *Ojoconmipisto* allows journalists to undertake extensive investigations and then inform the public about the irregular use of funds or other illegal actions. In 2014, *Ojoconmipisto* was awarded second place in the National Journalism Award for uncovering a scheme by a mayor and his wife to funnel public funds back to their accounts by enlisting a close friend.²⁴ Importantly, *Ojoconmipisto* journalists are trained to understand the bylaws that regulate access to public information, improving their ability to know when agencies or institutions may be violating their rights to information.²⁵

Recommendations

Public Sector: Challenges and obstacles to the freedoms of expression and of the press frequently come directly from government at all levels. Without political will and concerted action among the government, civil society, and the private sector, journalists and civil society in northern Central America will remain exposed to continued harassment and, potentially, death. Vulnerable journalists will also be hard pressed to accurately inform the public—a task that the current COVID-19 crisis has made all the more important. In El Salvador, a robust framework to protect journalists is the bare minimum. Restarting the debate on the 2017 Law for the Protection of Journalists is imperative. The comprehensive bill addresses issues from labor rights to different types of intimidation toward journalists, and aims to establish and implement public policy, protocols, and mechanisms to protect journalists.²⁶ This could be a first step in signaling the government's commitment to preserving freedom of the press and expression. Guatemala should consider adopting adequate prevention and protection mechanisms to avoid violence

against communicators. The government has informed the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, which was created by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, of the creation of some protection measures provided through the Protection of Persons and Security Division of the National Civil Police—but the proposed “NGO Law” would provide the opposite. Therefore, the state should create functional mechanisms of protection with a special focus on the protection of female, indigenous, and LGBTQ+ journalists, allocating the necessary funds to achieve this purpose. Currently, there are only minimal efforts to avoid the recurrence of attacks, harassment, stigmatization, and criminalization of communicators.²⁷

In the case of Honduras, the government could allocate more financial resources toward safe houses and protection for persecuted communicators and their families that does *not* involve the police or the military—institutions toward which many journalists and civil-society representatives remain skeptical.²⁸ Currently, the budget that allows funding for this mechanism comes from the Tax for the Safety of the Honduran Population (or *Tasa de Seguridad Poblacional*).²⁹ The exact percentage is not disclosed, although it can be inferred that it is less than \$500,000.³⁰ With help from civil society and the international community, activists and communications professionals could receive subsidized, or fully funded, self-protection courses. Based on similar models in Mexico and Colombia, forty-two journalists in Honduras have been issued protective measures through the 2015 Law for the Protection of Journalists, Social Communicators, Human Rights Defenders, and Operators of Justice. Some of these measures include bulletproof vests, temporary relocation, bodyguards, and alarms.³¹ However, in many cases, journalists face the burden of covering expenses for bodyguards or other protective measures. For journalists to inform and do their jobs, the government should also guarantee their integrity through programs that work to improve access to justice and to reduce impunity—particularly due to the long judicial delay and backlog of cases regarding violations against journalists.

Regional cross-cutting recommendations exist as well. For example, bolstering the Office of the Attorney General in all three countries can help to ensure real prosecution of those who commit crimes against journalists. For instance, the creation of a special unit that investigates all accusations related to freedom of expression and carries out a Witness Protection Program tailored especially for journalists could be a first step. Currently, there is no model of this in the region.

Private Sector and Civil Society: The private sector should have an interest in supporting the work of media in its country. Journalists and communications professionals can act as public watchdogs and help to uncover corruption and improve governance—which would be beneficial for a company’s bottom line. For this reason, the private sector could work on public-awareness-raising campaigns to advocate for legislation that is respectful of and strengthens civil liberties, including freedoms of expression, press, and association. The private sector could support civil society organizations that seek to create support networks for journalists, and could also join forces with civil society groups and donate protective gear for journalists.

II. REDUCING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Persistent Challenges

While the homicide rates in northern Central American countries have declined since 2018, violent crime and gang violence remain serious problems.³² Gender-based violence, or “harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender,” has reached alarming levels in northern Central America. At the beginning of 2021, a woman in Honduras was killed, on average, every thirty-six hours.³³ In Guatemala, records show one hundred and sixty femicides from January through April—an average of more than one death per day. Increased alcohol consumption and national lockdowns and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated the problem.³⁴

The problem is not new, and it is pushing women away from their homes in northern Central America. A report by the Migration Policy Institute shows that women have steadily made up a growing share of migrant apprehensions in Mexico and at the US border since 2012.³⁵ More recently, the threefold increase of female apprehensions at the US border in the span of a year (2018–2019) confirms the precarious situation from which many women and girls continue to escape.³⁶ Though the issue is not new, there are few resources or safe spaces for the victims. And, the levels of impunity are discouraging: in the case of El Salvador, data from 2017 shows that only a mere six percent of victims reported abuse to authorities.³⁷ In Honduras, since the criminalization of femicide in 2013, only fifteen cases have resulted in a conviction.³⁸ Statistics for Guatemala show that fewer than three percent of perpetrators are convicted.³⁹

A pervasive and defeatist sense that reporting cases of abuse to local authorities will not make a difference exists in all three countries. Worse still, given the infiltration of local gangs in the police forces, putting forth a complaint with the police could be a woman's final sentencing. As long as the government is unable to protect women, northern Central America's countries will remain the epicenter for gender-based violence in the hemisphere.

Gender-based violence also affects women's involvement in the community and in the political sphere, burdening even those women who do *not* migrate. Recently, the World Bank has stated that women in northern Central America face issues of human trafficking, gang violence, and social norms that limit their involvement in decision-making processes.⁴⁰ The lack of training on gender issues within the police forces and within the courts is also a persistent challenge. In Honduras, for example, since 2008, the judiciary received one course on gender, offered by the Honduran Center for Women's Studies.⁴¹ The vicious circle of low levels of female participation at all levels of civic life affects how and *if* particular issues affecting women are brought to the table.

Yet, the problem of gender-based violence is an important and unique concern amid other sources of violence and citizen insecurity in northern Central America. Narcotrafficking, extortion, forced disappearances at the hands of the *maras* criminal groups, and disputes over land are some sources of conflict that continue to push Central Americans out of their countries. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime has labeled extortion one of the main activities of criminal groups that causes displacement in northern Central America.⁴² Failure to promptly pay the "rent" or the "war tax" can result in death; people with small, informal businesses are easy targets.⁴³ In recent years, extortion has also extended to the rural areas of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, where land tenure has historically been a source of conflict.⁴⁴ As the United States and other international partners seek to support the countries in addressing these issues, they should also pay attention to rural and suburban communities. Trends in land ownership also highlight lower thresholds of legal security for women, a problem that compounds with the alarming rates of gender-based violence and unfettered femicides.⁴⁵

Past and Existing Efforts

Urgent action is needed in all three countries to address the perilous situation for women. The Center for the Rights of Women is a foundation in Honduras that addresses the

issue of gender-based violence and femicide, but it remains heavily underfunded.⁴⁶ In 2016, a special investigative unit for femicides was created within the public prosecutor's technical agency for crimes—an important effort that could join forces with other existing organizations to strengthen its scope and impact. The public prosecutor's office is undertrained on gender-specific issues and the unit exists only in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, the two biggest cities in Honduras.⁴⁷ Within the prosecutor's office, the National Inter-institutional Commission, which was established in 2018, follows up on investigations of violent deaths of women, but many civil-society organizations have denounced it for not publishing transparent statistics. Additionally, many reforms to the criminal code since 2018 have resulted in weakened sentences for crimes against women. While such sentences were previously thirty to forty years, convictions for femicide may now result in only twenty to thirty years in prison. Similarly, the sentence for rape has been reduced to 9–13 years, rather than the 10–15 years outlined in the previous code.⁴⁸

In 2008, the Guatemalan Congress passed the Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women. The law was an important recognition that domestic violence is not a private matter, and also created specialized courts and a special unit within the Office of the Prosecutor.⁴⁹ While the law introduced harsh sanctions—from twenty-five to fifty years in prison, with no possibility of reduction or substitution of sentence—mechanisms to implement the law have not been very effective.⁵⁰ Some officials abuse these laws to enforce gag orders on news outlets. For example, in past years, at least two instances of female politicians have abused laws that protect victims of gender-based violence to try to silence news outlets.⁵¹ Unfortunately, since 2008, total recorded femicide cases are close to 2,500, but fewer than six hundred cases have resulted in a conviction.⁵² As is the case in other northern Central American countries, actual convictions are well below the official records for femicides, which also may be underreported.

Civil society, the international community, and the local private sector have stepped in to address the rampant violence against women with tools and platforms available to anyone with access to the Internet. Crime Stoppers Guatemala is behind the website www.tupista.gt, which allows individuals to anonymously report instances of domestic violence, femicide, extortion, contraband, money laundering, and corruption. In recognition of Tupista's success and effectiveness, the government and the platform entered into an official partnership in June 2021.⁵³

In El Salvador, the Special Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women of 2010 was updated in 2021 to formally include political violence against women as a category of its own.⁵⁴ With this reform, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal should consider creating a public registry of all statistics and work on programs to strengthen civic awareness of political violence against women. Also, since 2012, USAID established seven assistance centers for victims of gender-based violence to provide services ranging from medical treatment and counseling to legal representation and vocational training across the country. These assistance centers were among the first in Central America. The Salvadoran government is also tending to a highly vulnerable group of women: returned migrants. Earlier this year, the government outlined a gender-focused strategy to support returned women migrants.⁵⁵ The announcement mentions support from the Spanish Agency for International Development, and details some of the services to which women will have access: health services, legal assistance, vocational and educational trainings, and access to professional certificates.

While country-specific efforts are important, regional efforts to address gender-based violence may also be potentially game changing. Regional organizations like *Fundación Cristosal* work in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador with specific communities to support victims of violence by providing protection through partnerships with municipalities to build safer communities. International efforts funded by USAID and implemented by Creative Associates International have also fostered positive impact through local alliances to establish community outreach centers for youth engagement. These initiatives have proven effective at deterring at-risk youth from joining gangs via programs like *Proponte Más* in Honduras, Community Roots Project in Guatemala, and *Altavista Felicidad y Paz* in El Salvador. Following the implementation of these initiatives, the enrolment rates in schools in these high-risk areas have increased as crime rates decreased. Similarly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has started the National Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights in Central America, with a gender-responsive protocol to facilitate a gender-specific risk analysis and identify adequate protection measures.

Recommendations

Public Sector: There are a number of ways for the governments to scale up their efforts in fighting the epidemic of gender-based violence. A first step could be to raise awareness of the available resources for women seeking help and refuge from abusers. On the flip side, governments could also more

publicly advertise sentences for perpetrators of violence against women. Doing this and utilizing specific cases of abusers who are serving a sentence, would discourage potential perpetrators and instill fears, as they could also face public shaming. A recommendation put forth in the Atlantic Council's 2017 Independent Central America Task Force Report, "Building a Better Future," included increasing the number of women in the police force. Research and global experience—from Canada and Australia—show a number of benefits to having more women among the security forces, including more trust in the police from communities.⁵⁶ To address the root causes of gender-based violence on a larger scale, governments should consider broadening partnerships and finding synergies with civil society organizations with proven track records on delivering results for women.

Private Sector and Civil Society: Larger corporations and businesses, as part of social-responsibility programs, can help civil society and women's organizations create mobile apps that respond to violence against women. Regional apps featuring such tools include "We Help" (in Mexico), *Botón de Pánico* and *Ni Una Menos* (in Argentina), or *#NiUnaMenos* (in Peru). These applications help because they alert the authorities in real time and allow the victim to ask for help. In many cases, the apps trigger an alarm (through a text message) with their geo-location, and are a safe, fast, and reliable channel of communication. While reporting remains unsafe for many victims—especially given gang infiltration in security forces—a special group of trained female police could be assigned to the specific task of aiding victims in distress who make use of such apps. The Women's Rights Office for the Mexican city of Juarez developed a similar app, *No estoy Solo*, that activates an alarm when the phone is shaken, because victims often don't have time to write a message when being attacked.⁵⁷ Clearly, apps are not a long-term solution, but rather a complementary step in addressing this problem. To strengthen the overall system, civil society organizations that have launched these tools should sit down with decision-makers and provide policy advice to governments. The recently created Citizen's Observatory for Corruption—partly funded by the US State Department—comprises several influential civil society organizations in Central America, which have begun meeting with State Department officials.⁵⁸

The United States and the International Community: If governments, through their ministries or institutes that work on women's rights, were to convene a working group to address gender-based violence, the European Union, the United Nations, and other international partners and organizations



Young activists take part in the Global Climate Strike of the Fridays for Future movement in San Salvador, El Salvador on September 20, 2019. The placards read: “We demand forests in the city, stop cutting and cutting down trees” and “We demand a public transport that does not contaminate.”

should have a seat at the table.⁵⁹ Their expertise on gender issues and their financial and technical support could be crucial to support the countries and judicial branches working to bring accountability to the victims.

Existing internationally supported programs to address violence in the region can also be scaled. USAID should continue funding programs and creating partnerships that create employment for women and help at-risk youth incorporate into society through counseling and trainings. Also, the European Union’s “Spotlight Initiative”—which focuses on decreasing femicide and lethal violence against women—should expand its on-the-ground resources and presence to continue working within communities to change the perception of violence against women and help authorities create and enforce legislation, while training citizens on how to denounce these issues without fear.⁶⁰ Beyond the siloed programs, there could be an argument and a renewed push for the US Congress to condition continued foreign assistance on the countries’ progress to address gender-based violence. The three countries could sign a memorandum of understanding with the appropriate US public institutions,

in which they agree to deliver yearly impact reports of the strategies being implemented to combat gender-based violence. If the statistics do not improve, assistance could be gradually reduced as an incentive for delivering impact.

III. BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Persistent Challenges

Climate change is an amplifier of ongoing instability in northern Central America, and increasingly a driving force of irregular migration.⁶¹ Due to extreme weather, —especially the continued increase in the intensity of seasonal rains and droughts, coupled with more destructive hurricanes, —farmers can barely harvest enough food to subsist —, let alone sell their produce. According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), over the last decade, the severe drought in the region’s Dry Corridor has caused an economic impact of more than \$5.7 billion for Honduras, \$3.5 billion for Guatemala, and \$2.2 billion for El Salvador. In Honduras alone, more than three million citizens, or 30 percent of the country’s population, will suffer from hunger and malnutrition in 2021.⁶²

Studies by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) confirm that 1.4 million people out of the 2.2 -million population in the Dry Corridor region urgently need food assistance.⁶³ Tropical hurricanes Eta and Iota, which hit the region in November 2020, devastated the lives of more than seven million people, including almost half of the Honduran population.⁶⁴ Almost a year later, many communities continue to face water and sanitation problems, uninhabitable houses, and lack of access to food. The climate-triggered disruptions have widened economic and social inequality in northern Central America, forced the internal displacement of thousands of Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans, and are increasingly pushing citizens to risk their lives to find better opportunities in the United States.

Past and Existing Efforts

At a regional level, northern Central American countries have taken some steps, with support from regional banks and international organizations, to address the effects of climate change on the livelihoods of Central Americans and on farmers more specifically. In the short term, the WFP and FAO are “requesting \$72 million from the international community to provide food assistance to more than 700,000 people in the Dry Corridor” and helping to “create and restore productive assets, diversify the subsistence farmers’ source of income, establish social protection safety nets and strengthen the farmers’ resilience in the face of future climate-related events.”⁶⁵ Over the long term, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration’s (CABEI) Change Investment Project Preparation Fund, which has provided \$4 billion to the region over the past five years, can help countries to mitigate the effects of climate disruptions, through both financial support and technical assistance for project preparation and natural-disaster and adaptation management. In Guatemala specifically, the government partnered with Taiwan’s International Cooperation and Development Fund and Columbia University in a project designed to generate climate information for citizens affected by climate disruptions, such as farmers and producers. A concerted focus on climate preparedness and early warning systems like NextGen, needs to be scaled up across the region. This forecasting system in Guatemala creates tailored regional climate predictions by identifying variables relevant to users.⁶⁶ The predictions allow small landholders to make informed decisions in terms of either relocating or adapting to abrupt and unpredictable climate effects.

At the same time, since 2015, under the Central American Sustainable Energy Strategy 2030 (*EESCA, Estrategia Energética Sustentable Centroamericana 2030*), the Central

American Electrical Interconnection System (SIEPAC)—the interconnection system of the power grids of six Central American countries—proposed plans for transitioning to clean energy and grid modernization that, if successfully implemented, has the potential to secure more climate-resilient energy infrastructure and generate new jobs. While El Salvador is doing better off in advancing on clean-energy and modernization projects, Honduras is facing many delays, especially given its heavy reliance on fossil fuels. In a setback for the region’s ambitions for energy integration, Guatemala retired from SIEPAC in July 2021 after alleging that mismanagement of SIEPAC’s regional electric negatively impacted Guatemala’s national interests in the electric sector.⁶⁷

At a country level, Honduras, has launched a decarbonization plan to reduce emission by 2050, a proposal similar to one in Costa Rica, which that seeks to help drive the technological transformation of critical sectors, such as transportation, energy, waste, and agriculture. This initiative was supported by the European Union through its *EuroClima+* program, which also provides training to small and medium-sized companies in El Salvador for certification and accreditation in energy efficiency.

Recommendations

Public Sector: Even at a time of fiscal insolvency, governments in the region should consider prioritizing strategic investments in climate-prevention efforts, as well as climate monitoring, forecasting, and risk preparedness. Agriculture is the bedrock of Central American livelihoods, which are increasingly threatened by intense and volatile weather patterns. Therefore, agricultural ministries, with support from international organizations, should ensure that small producers and farmers can recover from catastrophic climatic events, by subsidizing seeds of crops that are more resilient to droughts. Additionally, ministries should consider implementing broader conservation and water-saving measures and provide capacity building on best practices to prevent soil erosion and runoff. As stated by a Migration Policy Institute, “early policy interventions can mitigate the effects of climate extremes on food insecurity, hunger, and, ultimately, migration,” especially if local and national governments focus on understanding the nuances around the impact of climate change on the way farmers live and work.⁶⁸

To secure climate resilience, it is also imperative that indigenous groups are included in financial and technical support for small growers and climate-affected communities. As mentioned in this publication, there has been an alarming



Farmers in the village of Orocuina, affected by the drought, wait in line for distribution of food aid donated by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). A severe drought has ravaged crops in Central America and as many as 2.81 million people are struggling to feed themselves. August 28, 2014

increase in selective violence toward social and environmental activists and Indigenous communities. Engagement with local communities and existing civil society organizations is essential for the success of all climate-action measures, especially to ensure that the most affected populations are able to adapt and grow in a changing climate, rather than migrating in mass numbers as a result of disruptive weather patterns and disasters.

Private Sector and Civil Society: As stated in the first policy brief of this series, *The Role of the Private Sector in Catalyzing Inclusive Economic Opportunities in the Northern Triangle*, published in March 2021, investment in renewable energy is the area with the most potential to yield benefits beyond climate-change mitigation.⁶⁹ Projects related to reducing emissions related to climate change, such as public-private partnerships in public sustainable-transportation projects—for instance, electric or hydrogen buses—would vastly improve conditions to reduce the impacts of climate change, while also tackling insecurity and extortion.

Paired with investments in technical education and training, investments in renewable energy could help to create higher-value jobs, reduce overdependence in agriculture and manufacturing, and catalyze economic development as more affordable and reliable energy becomes more widely accessible. In-country businesses in the agriculture industry—particularly those that export coffee, fruits, and seafood—can facilitate investment that provides farmers and small producers with climate predictability through digital forecasting technologies made available in mobile applications. This would allow the agricultural sector—one of the biggest in Central American economies—to make more informed decisions, minimize losses, maximize crop production, and improve food security.

Additionally, civil society, together with the national and international private sector and universities – both local and international— could set up partnerships to make weather and climate data available and digestible to key decision-making stakeholders. For example, on June 2021, the United

States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced a new Cooperative Institute for Severe and High-Impact Weather Research and Operations in the United States, in partnership with seventy universities and research institutions.⁷⁰ A partnership like this, in Central America, could help policymakers prepare for climate disasters.

The United States and the International Community: The United States, the European Union, and multilateral and financial institutions like the World Bank, the IDB, CABEL, and the Green Climate Fund must continue facilitating financial support for at-risk countries in northern Central America to adapt to climate impacts. The Biden administration's *Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration in Central America* includes \$310 million in urgent relief to help address the climatic factors of migration, such as hurricanes and droughts. To date, around \$250 million of the total funds have been allocated, reaching more than two million people, but the strategy could benefit from adding more partners and co-financers to assure its sustainability. It is also crucial that global climate summits include buy-in from northern Central American countries suffering from the worst effects of climate change. Central America's absence in the Leaders' Summit on Climate hosted by the United States in April 2021 is a stark reminder of the increasing importance of raising the voice of climate-affected countries on the global stage.⁷¹ Including the perspectives of communities in northern Central America's Dry Corridor, for example, is a value-adding measure for the negotiations at the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26).

The United States, specifically, should appeal to northern Central America countries to raise their ambitions and push for more significant support for these vulnerable nations to adapt to the high impacts of climate change. Achieving resilient societies is an integral part of meeting national development goals and addressing a root cause of migration. As stated by the World Bank, "concerted action on climate change mitigation and adaptation and inclusive development policies that embedding climate migration into planning will help reduce the number of climate migrants by 2030."⁷² Actors at all levels of government and across sectors must leverage this "window of opportunity to invest in knowledge, mitigation, and adaptation and take steps now to secure resilience for all significant gains in sustaining livelihoods that help people stay in place."⁷³

IV. CONCLUSION

Ongoing social instability in northern Central American countries—as a result of violence and citizen insecurity, curtailment of civil liberties, and unforgiving changes in the climate—poses serious threats to the livelihoods of Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans, with reverberations across the region and in the United States. As this publication and the previous two policy briefs in this series have shown, there is no quick or easy remedy to tackle the numerous challenges facing northern Central America. So, how can renewed US leadership help catalyze the broad and sustained multinational and multisector support to set a new direction for the region?

The Biden administration has been both strategic and intentional in prioritizing a comprehensive approach to help northern Central Americans find hope in their own countries. The release of the *US Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America* report was a much-needed step in what will inevitably be a long-term effort to improve the living conditions forcing migrants to search for better futures in the United States. In line with the focus and analysis of this publication, two-thirds of the report is dedicated to promoting press freedoms, countering violence and illicit activities perpetrated by organized criminal organizations, and combating gender-based violence.

With a clear vision of the desired outcome, strategic pillars, and lines of effort, the implementation of the strategy must now begin with old and new value-adding partners across sectors and geographies to build on past and existing experiences, mobilize resources for new efforts, and importantly, effectively communicate implementation requirements, expectations, and progress to US-based and in-region stakeholders.

One important next step to sustain ongoing efforts to tackle the sources of social instability, generate jobs, and combat corruption is to secure bipartisan support from the US Congress. Only by codifying a long-term effort into legislation that can lock-in financial, technical, and diplomatic commitments will the United States and northern Central America have a chance to generate long-term structural improvements so that would-be migrants have the option to remain in their communities. Galvanizing this bipartisan consensus will be the next chapter of the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center's Central America programming, with continued support from NTAG, which has been instrumental to informing and advancing this last brief of the three-part series in partnership with DT Institute. As well, in this next phase of work, local and regional collaboration will be critical to enacting the recommended policy changes contained in these briefs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This issue brief is the last of three publications as part of the work of the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center's Northern Triangle Advisory Group (members listed below), a high-level group of policymakers, business leaders, and civil society from northern Central America that seeks to create a basis for consensus and galvanize support for strengthening the rule of law and mitigating corruption, increasing productivity, enabling sustainable economic development, and reducing conflict in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Thank you to Center Director Jason Marczak for his leadership and support in making this project a success. Thank you as well to the Center's in-region consultant, Gina Kawas, for her research and writing support. This publication was produced with the generous financial support of DT Institute. Thank you to DT Institute for its insights and collaboration.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

María Fernanda Bozmoski is deputy director, programs at the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, where she leads the center's work on Mexico, the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement (USMCA), and Central America, and contributes to projects on regional trade integration as well as disinformation in Latin America. Bozmoski has co-led the center's Central America Task Force, managed the center's trade portfolio, and programmed events in Asia for US policymakers. She speaks native Spanish, English, and French, fluent Italian, and near-fluent Portuguese.

María Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila is a nonresident senior fellow at the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center. She is the first woman to be designated minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of El Salvador, serving from 1999 to 2004 after being founder and president of Internacional de Seguro and her family business, La Auxiliadora Funeral Home. In 2004, Brizuela de Ávila served as CEO of Banco Salvadoreño, retaining her role as the bank forged a strategic alliance with Banistmo. From 2007 to 2015, she was corporate sustainability head for HSBC Latin America. She is currently involved with Inversiones Visión, her executive coaching and consulting firm. Brizuela de Ávila serves as on the board of several nonprofits, such as the University of Miami External Advisory Board on Latin America, and as non-executive director on business boards, such as Davivienda Financial Conglomerate in El Salvador and Honduras. In August 2020, she was included in *Forbes'* 2020 list of the 100 Most Powerful Women in Central America and the Caribbean.

Domingo Sadurní is assistant director at the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, where he covers Venezuela and Central America. Sadurní joined the Council as an intern in February 2018, previously working at J.P. Morgan's private bank and Banco Popular de Puerto Rico. Sadurní earned a bachelor's degree in finance and political science from Boston College. He speaks native English and Spanish.

ENDNOTES

- 1 “Fact Sheet: Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration in Central America,” White House, July 29, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/29/fact-sheet-strategy-to-address-the-root-causes-of-migration-in-central-america/>.
- 2 “Freedom in the World 2021: Guatemala,” Freedom House, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/guatemala/freedom-world/2021>; “Freedom in the World 2021: Honduras,” Freedom House, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/honduras/freedom-world/2021>; “Freedom in the World 2021: El Salvador,” Freedom House, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/el-salvador/freedom-world/2021>.
- 3 Adeline Hite and Adriana Beltrán, “PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS: La nueva ley de ONG de Guatemala,” WOLA, March 19, 2020, <https://www.wola.org/es/analisis/nueva-ley-ong-guatemala/>
- 4 “Guatemala: UN and OAS experts sound alarm about ‘choking’ NGO law,” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27248&LangID=E>
- 5 Sabrina Rodríguez, “Harris’ Blunt Message in Guatemala: ‘Do Not Come’ to U.S.,” *Político*, June 7, 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/06/07/harris-message-in-guatemala-do-not-come-492047>.
- 6 Diario La Hora (@lahoragt), “Se publicó en el diario oficial el reglamento de la Ley de ONGs para el Desarrollo, establecido en el acuerdo gubernativo 157-2021 de Ministerio de Gobernación,” Twitter, August 2, 2021, 8:22 a.m., https://twitter.com/lahoragt/status/1422186122713747460?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw.
- 7 Lourdes Arana, “C suspende provisionalmente ‘algunas frases’ a reformas a Ley de ONG’S” *La Hora*, July 14, 2021, <https://lahora.gt/cc-suspende-provisionalmente-algunas-frases-a-reformas-a-ley-de-ongs/>
- 8 Carlos Ramos, “Comisión Especial que Investiga Acoso a Periodistas Aprueba su Informe Final,” La Nueva Asamblea Legislativa, November 4, 2020, <https://www.asamblea.gob.sv/node/10735>.
- 9 “Mexican Journalist Daniel Lizárraga Expelled from El Salvador,” Committee to Protect Journalists, July 12, 2021, <https://cpj.org/2021/07/mexican-journalist-daniel-lizarraga-expelled-from-el-salvador/>.
- 10 “On the Expulsion of Daniel Lizárraga,” *Faro*, July 8, 2021, <https://elfaro.net/en/202107/columns/25598/On-the-Expulsion-of-Daniel-Liz%C3%A1rraga.htm>.
- 11 “Anteproyecto de Ley Especial para la Protección Integral de Personas Periodistas, Comunicadoras y Trabajadoras de la Comunicación y la Información,” Asociación de Periodistas de El Salvador, https://apes.org.sv/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/PROYECTO-DE-LEY_MARZO-2021.pdf.
- 12 Julio Lubianco, “Latin American Countries Fall in Global Press Freedom Ranking,” *LatAm Journalism Review*, Knight Center, April 21, 2021, <https://latamjournalismreview.org/articles/latin-american-countries-fall-in-global-press-freedom-ranking/>.
- 13 “Freedom in the World 2021: Honduras.”
- 14 “El Viacrucis de ser Periodista en Honduras: Asesinatos, Despidos y Una ‘Ley de Secretos,’” *Criterio*.hn, October 13, 2020, <https://criterio.hn/el-viacrucis-de-ser-periodista-en-honduras-asesinatos-despidos-y-una-ley-de-secretos/>.
- 15 “Honduras: Eventos de 2020,” Human Rights Watch, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2021/country-chapters/377435>.
- 16 Marlon Gonzalez, “Honduras’ New Penal Code Lightens Sentences for Corruption,” Associated Press, June 25, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/1efbd7e8a44f6c2458fb6a15c2950642>; “Honduras Enacts New Criminal Code Enabling Criminalisation of Protestors and Journalists,” Monitor, Civicus, July 13, 2020, <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/07/13/honduras-enacts-new-criminal-code-enabling-criminalisation-protesters-and-journalists/#:~:text=On%2025th%20June%202020%2C%20Honduras,code%20enables%20criminalisation%20of%20protests>.
- 17 “Conócenos,” C-Libre, <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/conocenos>
- 18 “Organizaciones de Sociedad Civil Interponen Denuncia Colectiva por Detenciones Arbitrarias Contra Periodistas Hondureños en el Marco de la Pandemia por COVID-19,” ConexiHon, November 21, 2020, <http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/1782-organizaciones-de-sociedad-civil-interponen-denuncia-colectiva-por-detenciones-arbitrarias-contra-periodistas-hondurenos-en-el-marco-de-la-pandemia-por-covid-19>.
- 19 “Periodistas hondureños en el marco de la pandemia por COVID-19.”
- 20 “Categoría: Proyectos de Datos,” Tracoda, <http://tracoda.info/category/proyectos/datos>.
- 21 Walter Escalante, “Jóvenes de Todo el País Fueron Capacitados Sobre la Corte de Cuentas,” Tracoda, December 1, 2018, <http://tracoda.info/jovenes-de-todo-el-pais-fueron-capacitados-sobre-la-corte-de-cuentas>.
- 22 “Periodistas Rechazan Reformas a Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública en El Salvador,” Voice of America, July 14, 2021, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/libertad-de-prensa/periodistas-rechazan-reformas-ley-acceso-informacion-publica-elsalvador>.
- 23 Marina Estarque, “Guatemalan Journalists Fight Threats and Lack of Transparency to Do Investigative and Community Journalism,” *LatAm Journalism Review*, Knight Center, June 16, 2021, <https://latamjournalismreview.org/articles/guatemalan-journalists-fight-threats-and-lack-of-transparency-to-do-investigative-and-community-journalism/>.
- 24 “Contamos Historias Humanas. Investigamos la Realidad. Escarbamos Datos,” No-Ficción, <https://www.no-ficcion.com/nosotros-as>.
- 25 “Reportaje de Ojoconmipisto, Segundo Lugar Premio Nacional de Periodismo 2014,” Ojoconmipisto.com, December 10, 2014, <https://www.ojoconmipisto.com/segundo-lugar-premio-nacional-periodismo-2014/>;
“La Formula del Alcalde y la Diputada Patriotas para Vender al Estado,” Ojoconmipisto.com, September 14, 2014, <https://www.ojoconmipisto.com/formula-alcalde-diputada-para-vender-al-estado/>.
- 26 “Que es Ojoconmipisto?” Ojoconmipisto.com, <https://www.ojoconmipisto.com/quienes-somos/>.
- 27 Silvia Higuera, “Protection Law for Journalists in El Salvador Still Out of Reach, Even as Attacks Grow,” *LatAm Journalism Review*, Knight Center, May 19, 2021, <https://latamjournalismreview.org/articles/protection-law-for-journalists-in-el-salvador-still-out-of-reach-even-as-attacks-grow/>; “Anteproyecto de Ley Especial para la Protección Integral de Personas Periodistas, Comunicadoras y Trabajadoras de la Comunicación y la Información.”
- 28 “Office of the Special Rapporteur Condemns the Murder of Activist and Communicator Frank Stalyn Ramazzini and Urges the State of Guatemala to Completely and Impartially Investigate the Facts,” OAS, press release, July 16, 2021, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/showarticle.asp?ID=1&artID=1204>.
- 29 “Has a Mechanism to Protect Journalists, Social Communicators, Human Rights Defenders and Justice Operators Been Created?” Committee to Protect Journalists, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Expression/FollowUPVisits/2019/Honduras%20-%20Committee%20for%20the%20Protection%20of%20Journalists.pdf>.
- 30 “Ley de Protección para las y los Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Periodistas, Comunicadores Sociales y Operadores de Justicia, y su Reglamento,” Gobierno de la Republica de Honduras and Programa de Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos en Honduras (PADH), 2016, <https://www.sedh.gob.hn/documentos-recientes/263-ley-de-proteccion-para-las-y-los-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-periodistas-comunicadores-sociales-y-operadores-de-justicia/file>.
- 31 “Distribución de Desembolsos por Institución Ejecutora 2012–Agosto 2021,” Tasa de Seguridad Poblacional, <https://www.tasadesseguridad.hn/estadisticas.php?p=1>.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 “The Northern Triangle is Becoming Less Murderous,” *Economist*, December 8, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2018/12/08/the-northern-triangle-is-becoming-less-murderous>.
- 34 “Gender-Based Violence,” United Nations Commission on Human Rights, <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html#:~:text=Gender%2DBased%20violence%20refers%20to,threatening%20health%20and%20protection%20issue;FernandoMaldonado,‘Cada36HorasAsesinanUnaMujerenHondurasen2021,’Heraldo,February11,2021,https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1442033-466/honduras-femicidios-femicidios-2021-asesinatos-muertes-mujeres>.
- 35 Maria Fernanda Bozmoski, “The Northern Triangle: The World’s Epicenter for Gender-Based Violence,” *Atlantic Council*, March 3, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-northern-triangle-the-worlds-epicenter-for-gender-based-violence/>.

- 35 Jeffrey Hallock, et al., "In Search of Safety, Growing Numbers of Women Flee Central America," Migration Policy Institute, May 30, 2018, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/search-safety-growing-numbers-women-flee-central-america>.
- 36 Julia Westbrook, "How Mexico and Central America's Femicide Epidemic Drives and Complicates the Migrant Crisis," *New Humanitarian*, February 27, 2020, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/02/27/Femicide-migration-Central-America-Mexico-US-Mexico-women-violence>.
- 37 "Violence Against Women in El Salvador is Driving Them to Suicide—or to the U.S. Border," *Time*, <https://time.com/5582894/gender-violence-women-el-salvador/>.
- 38 Vienna Herrera, "Femicide in Honduras: Women Dismissed by Their Own Government," *Contra Corriente*, August 8, 2020, <https://contracorriente.red/en/2020/08/08/femicide-in-honduras-women-dismissed-by-their-own-government/>.
- 39 Oliver Pieper, "In Guatemala, Women Fear for Their Lives," *Deutsche Welle*, May 2, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/in-guatemala-women-fear-for-their-lives/a-57397987>.
- 40 Caneel Dixon and Christine Krueger, "The Influence of Gangs in Central America with Respect to Woman's Wellbeing," Proceedings of the 2020 Annual General Donald R. Keith Memorial Capstone Conference, April 30, 2020, http://www.ieworldconference.org/content/WP2020/Papers/GDRKMCC_20_80.pdf.
- 41 Herrera, "Femicide in Honduras: Women Dismissed by Their Own Government."
- 42 "A Criminal Culture: Extortion in Central America," Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, May 2019, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Central-American-Extortion-Report-English-03May1400-WEB.pdf>.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 "Unearthed: Land, Power, and Inequality in Central America," Oxfam, November 2016, https://www.cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-land-power-inequality-latin-america-301116-en.pdf.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 "Sobre Nosotras," Centro de Derechos de Mujeres, <https://derechosdelamujer.org/sobre-nosotras/>
- 47 Herrera, "Femicide in Honduras: Women Dismissed by Their Own Government."
- 48 Jeff Ernst, "The Death of a Young Woman in Police Custody Outrages Honduras," *Vice*, February 16, 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7vmmq/the-death-of-a-young-woman-in-police-custody-outrages-hondurans>.
- 49 "Take Five: 'A Feminist in Decision-Making Roles Make a Difference,'" UN Women, May 3, 2018, <https://lac.unwomen.org/en/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2018/5/take-five-thelma-aldana>.
- 50 Juan Carlos Zapata, "Ni Una Menos," *Prensa Libre*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.prensalibre.com/opinion/columnasdiarias/ni-una-menos/>.
- 51 "Trust Deficit: Guatemala's New President Must Overcome Skepticism to Improve Press Freedom," Committee to Protect Journalists, March 27, 2020, <https://cpj.org/reports/2020/03/guatemala-giammattei-journalists-online-harass-discredit-corruption-environment/>.
- 52 Asier Vera Santamaría, "#TengoMiedo, el Grito Contra los Asesinatos y Desapariciones de Mujeres y Niñas en Guatemala," *País*, April 27, 2021, <https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2021-04-28/tengomiedo-la-campana-que-desvela-el-aumento-de-asesinatos-y-desapariciones-de-mujeres-y-ninas-en-guatemala.html>.
- 53 Jeanelly Vásquez, "Mingob Publica Acuerdo para Implementar Plataforma de Denuncia Anonima," *Hora*, June 16, 2021, <https://lahora.gt/mingob-publica-acuerdo-para-implementar-plataforma-de-denuncia-anonima/>.
- 54 Beatriz Calderón, "Publican Reformas que Tipifican la Violencia Política en Ley para Una Vida Libre de Violencia para las Mujeres. Qué Incluyen?" *Prensa Grafica*, March 23, 2021, <https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/Entran-en-vigencia-reformas-que-tipifican-la-violencia-politica-en-Ley-para-una-vida-libre-de-violencia-para-las-mujeres-Que-incluyen-20210323-0070.html>.
- 55 "El Salvador presenta estrategia para atención de mujeres migrantes retornadas," *EFE*, April 19, 2021, https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/crisis-migratoria-el-salvador_el-salvador-presenta-estrategia-para-atenci%C3%B3n-de-mujeres-migrantes-retornadas/46548472
- 56 Ivonne Roman, "Women in Policing," *Police Chief*, <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/women-in-policing/>.
- 57 Victoria Dannemann, "In Latin America, Women Turn to Apps to Combat Sexual Violence," *Deutsche Welle*, October 5, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/in-latin-america-women-turn-to-apps-to-combat-sexual-violence/a-50664628>.
- 58 "Observatorio ciudadano de corrupción," <https://occ-america.com/sobre-occ/#OCC/#FCA/#redlad/#pp/#org>
- 59 Cory Smith, "Addressing the Sex and Gender-Based Violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador Fueling the U.S. Border Crisis," Pulte Institute for Global Development, 2020, https://pulte.nd.edu/assets/383519/report_sgbv_cory_smith.pdf.
- 60 Tomás Pallás Aparisi and Klaus Rudischhauser, "Spotlight Initiative: Countering Violence Against Women in Central America," European Union, May 14, 2018, <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/spotlight-initiative-countering-violence-against-women-central-america>.
- 61 Maria Fernanda Bozmoski and Wazim Mowla, "Hemispheric Aid During a Unique Hurricane Season," *RealClear World*, April 27, 2021, https://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2021/04/27/hemispheric_aid_during_a_unique_hurricane_season_774712.html.
- 62 "Central America on the Edge of a New Cyclone Season Without Resolving the Impacts of Eta and Iota," *Care*, May 4, 2021, <https://www.care-international.org/news/press-releases/central-america-on-the-edge-of-a-new-cyclone-season-without-resolving-the-impacts-of-eta-and-iota>.
- 63 "Erratic Weather Patterns in the Central American Dry Corridor Leave 1.4 million people in Urgent Need of Food Assistance," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, April 25, 2019, <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/stories/stories-detail/en/c/1192519/>.
- 64 "El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—Regional Response, Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year (FY) 2021," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, April 27, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/el-salvador-guatemala-and-honduras-regional-response-fact-sheet-1-fiscal-year-fy>.
- 65 <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1191887/icode/> "Erratic Weather Patterns in the Central American Dry Corridor Leave 1.4 Million People in Urgent Need of Food Assistance."
- 66 The system was developed as part of ACToday, a project launched in 2017 by Columbia University's International Research Institute for Climate and Society that aims to use climate knowledge to improve food security and combat hunger in six countries heavily reliant on agriculture and vulnerable to climate variability and change. Diego Pons, "Climate Extremes, Food Insecurity, and Migration in Central America: A Complicated Nexus," Migration Policy Institute, February 18, 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/climate-food-insecurity-migration-central-america-guatemala>.
- 67 Rosa Maria Bolanos, "Las Tres Razones por las que Guatemala Deja el Mercado Electro Regional," *Economista*, July 20, 2021, <https://www.eleconomista.net/actualidad/Las-tres-razones-por-las-que-Guatemala-deja-el-Mercado-Elctrico-Regional-20210720-0015.html>.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 María Fernanda Bozmoski and Domingo Sadurní, *The Role of the Private Sector in Catalyzing Inclusive Economic Opportunities in the Northern Triangle*, Atlantic Council, March 31, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/the-role-of-the-private-sector-in-catalyzing-inclusive-economic-opportunities-in-the-northern-triangle/#Preparing-the-Northern-Triangle>.
- 70 "NOAA names University of Oklahoma to host new institute for severe and high-impact weather research," *NOAA Research News*, June 15, 2021, <https://research.noaa.gov/article/ArtMID/587/ArticleID/2770/NOAA-names-University-of-Oklahoma-to-host-new-institute-for-severe-and-high-impact-weather-research>
- 71 "President Biden Invites 40 World Leaders to Leaders Summit on Climate," White House, March 26, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/26/president-biden-invites-40-world-leaders-to-leaders-summit-on-climate/>.
- 72 "Internal Climate Migration in Latin America," World Bank Group, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/983921522304806221/pdf/124724-BRI-PUBLIC-NEWSERIES-Groundswell-note-PN3.pdf>.
- 73 Ibid.

NORTHERN TRIANGLE ADVISORY GROUP

Northern Triangle Advisory Group members have provided critical insight and ideas as part of the drafting of this issue brief. Findings and recommendations of this brief, however, do not necessarily reflect the personal opinions of the individuals listed below or the organizations to which they are affiliated.

GUATEMALA

Marcos Andrés Antil

XumaK

Víctor Juárez

TuConsejería

Salvador Paiz

PDC Capital/Fundación para el Desarrollo de Guatemala (FUNDESA)

EL SALVADOR

María Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila

Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center/
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador

Diego de Sola

Grupo de Sola/Glasswing International

Javier Simán

Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada (ANEP)

Marjorie Trigueros

Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social (FUSADES)

Claudia Umaña Araujo

Democracia Transparencia Justicia

HONDURAS

Gabriela Castellanos

Consejo Nacional Anticorrupción (CNA)

Jacqueline Foglia

Consejo Nacional de Inversiones (CNI)

Carlos Hernández

Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa/Transparency International, Honduras

Guillermo Peña Panting

Fundación Eléutera

Juan Carlos Sikaffy

Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada (COHEP)

OTHER - REGIONAL

Enrique Bolaños

INCAE Business School

Laura Chinchilla

Former President Costa Rica, AALAC Advisory Council Member

OTHER - INTERNATIONAL

Mari Carmen Aponte

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs

Arturo Aguilar

Rockefeller Brothers Fund

David Holiday

Open Society Foundations

Matthew M. Rooney

George W. Bush Institute—SMU Economic Growth Initiative

Santiago Sedaca

DT Global

Mary Ann Walker

Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center Advisory Council

Enrique Roig*

Creative Associates

*Mr. Roig is now with the US Department of State's Office of the Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights. He contributed to this project as a member of the organization listed above.



CHAIRMAN

*John F.W. Rogers

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

*James L. Jones

PRESIDENT AND CEO

*Frederick Kempe

EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRS

*Adrienne Arsht

*Stephen J. Hadley

VICE CHAIRS

*Robert J. Abernethy

*Richard W. Edelman

*C. Boyden Gray

*Alexander V. Mirtchev

*John J. Studzinski

TREASURER

*George Lund

DIRECTORS

Stéphane Abrial

Todd Achilles

*Peter Ackerman

Timothy D. Adams

*Michael Andersson

David D. Aufhauser

Barbara Barrett

Colleen Bell

Stephen Biegun

*Rafic A. Bizri

*Linden P. Blue

Adam Boehler

Philip M. Breedlove

Myron Brilliant

*Esther Brimmer

R. Nicholas Burns

*Richard R. Burt

Teresa Carlson

James E. Cartwright

John E. Chapoton

Ahmed Charai

Melanie Chen

Michael Chertoff

*George Chopivsky

Wesley K. Clark

Beth Connaughty

*Helima Croft

Ralph D. Crosby, Jr.

*Ankit N. Desai

Dario Deste

*Paula J. Dobriansky

Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.

Thomas J. Egan, Jr.

Stuart E. Eizenstat

Thomas R. Eldridge

Mark T. Esper

*Alan H. Fleischmann

Jendayi E. Frazer

Courtney Geduldig

Meg Gentle

Thomas H. Glocer

John B. Goodman

*Sherri W. Goodman

Murathan Günal

Amir A. Handjani

Frank Haun

Michael V. Hayden

Amos Hochstein

Tim Holt

*Karl V. Hopkins

Andrew Hove

Mary L. Howell

Ian Ihnatowycz

Wolfgang F. Ischinger

Deborah Lee James

Joia M. Johnson

*Maria Pica Karp

Andre Kelleners

Henry A. Kissinger

*C. Jeffrey Knittel

Franklin D. Kramer

Laura Lane

Jan M. Lodal

Douglas Lute

Jane Holl Lute

William J. Lynn

Mark Machin

Mian M. Mansha

Marco Margheri

Michael Margolis

Chris Marlin

William Marron

Gerardo Mato

Timothy McBride

Erin McGrain

John M. McHugh

Eric D.K. Melby

*Judith A. Miller

Dariusz Mioduski

*Michael J. Morell

*Richard Morningstar

Georgette Mosbacher

Dambisa F. Moyo

Virginia A. Mulberger

Mary Claire Murphy

Edward J. Newberry

Thomas R. Nides

Franco Nuschese

Joseph S. Nye

Ahmet M. Ören

Sally A. Painter

Ana I. Palacio

*Kostas Pantazopoulos

Alan Pellegrini

David H. Petraeus

W. DeVier Pierson

Lisa Pollina

Daniel B. Poneman

*Dina H. Powell

McCormick

Ashraf Qazi

Robert Rangel

Thomas J. Ridge

Gary Rieschel

Lawrence Di Rita

Michael J. Rogers

Charles O. Rossotti

Harry Sachinis

C. Michael Scaparrotti

Ivan A. Schlager

Rajiv Shah

Kris Singh

Walter Slocombe

Christopher Smith

Clifford M. Sobel

James G. Stavridis

Michael S. Steele

Richard J.A. Steele

Mary Streett

*Frances M. Townsend

Clyde C. Tuggle

Melanne Verveer

Charles F. Wald

Michael F. Walsh

Ronald Weiser

Olin Wethington

Maciej Witucki

Neal S. Wolin

*Jenny Wood

Guang Yang

Mary C. Yates

Dov S. Zakheim

HONORARY DIRECTORS

James A. Baker, III

Ashton B. Carter

Robert M. Gates

James N. Mattis

Michael G. Mullen

Leon E. Panetta

William J. Perry

Colin L. Powell

Condoleezza Rice

Horst Teltschik

William H. Webster

**Executive Committee Members*

List as of July 13, 2021



The Atlantic Council is a nonpartisan organization that promotes constructive US leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting today's global challenges.

© 2021 The Atlantic Council of the United States. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Atlantic Council, except in the case of brief quotations in news articles, critical articles, or reviews. Please direct inquiries to:

Atlantic Council

1030 15th Street, NW, 12th Floor,
Washington, DC 20005

(202) 463-7226, www.AtlanticCouncil.org