



*The Ambassador*

*Embassy of the United States of America*

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Guatemala City, Guatemala

November 28, 2011

Ms. Kelsey Alford Jones  
Director  
Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA  
3321 12<sup>th</sup> Street NE  
Washington, DC 20017

Dear Ms. Alford-Jones:

Thank you for the October 31 letter and for the efforts your coalition is playing in promoting justice and accountability and the observance of human rights in Guatemala. I agree with your suggestion that the Embassy should continue to focus on promoting justice sector reform, expanding government transparency, and the protection of human rights. These are consistent with longstanding USG policy and are priorities of mine. The protection of human rights is much more than a priority – it is an American value and a core tenet of the Obama administration's foreign policy.


As your letter points out, the new government will face an array of difficult challenges including rampant violence and impunity, organized crime, poverty, and corruption. In this sense, probably nothing occupies the attention and resources of the Embassy – or is more important – than the effort we put into helping the Guatemalan government build institutions that work and enjoy the trust of its people. Building up respect for the rule of law is an essential part of this effort. In this regard, the Embassy very much values the work that Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) are doing, and will continue to be a forceful advocate for an effective CICIG presence and an independent Attorney General.

Combating the impunity that afflicts Guatemala today also depends in part on the country addressing in a meaningful way its painful past. In this respect, I would note that President-elect Otto Perez Molina on November 26 publicly declared, regarding the criminal cases dating from the internal armed conflict that are currently making their way through the court system, that his administration will respect the law and that the cases should continue and penalties be applied against those who have committed crimes. Since his election, the President-elect has made similar assurance in meetings with visiting USG officials. The Embassy and I personally will continue to closely monitor developments in this respect.

One thing that has pleasantly surprised me since my arrival in Guatemala three months ago is the growing strength and influence of civil society. I can assure you that I will remain in regular and close contact with a wide variety of civil society representatives during my tenure.

In closing, please allow me to thank you again for your letter and to assure you that we share the same goals in helping to build a Guatemala that is peaceful, prosperous, and fully respectful of the rights of its people.

Sincerely,



Arnold A. Chacon  
Ambassador