



HUMAN RIGHTS, MIGRATION, AND COVID-19 IN GUATEMALA:

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES AND IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITIES

ABSTRACT

The response to the Covid-19 public health crisis has had a great social and economic impact on Guatemalan society. Based on the available data and information, the report finds that the measures and programs adopted by the government to respond to the crisis didn't offer an integrated approach, leaving many Guatemalans—especially those living in material poverty—in a very vulnerable situation during a strict lockdown. Domestic and sexual violence increased during the lockdown as did hate crimes and continued invisibilization of the LGBTQ+ community. Children and youth faced an interruption of their education given that the public education system did not provide adequate remote-learning services to those in marginalized urban areas and those in very rural areas without access to technology.

The emigration of Guatemalans did not stop despite the closed borders. However, the risk and the conditions of irregular emigration worsened. Meanwhile, a lack of employment for Guatemalans living in the U.S. was reflected in a decrease of remittances between February and April 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on integral development that includes **inclusive policies** on quality employment, housing, justice, education, health, and safety.
- Guarantee the implementation of those policies already in place through increased **accountability and transparency** mechanisms such as a citizen participation and dialogue.
- The government should guarantee **judicial independence** and transparency in the selection process of judges and magistrates.
- Improve the correspondence between the local legislation and its commitment with **international human rights conventions**.
- Increase and **properly implement the national budget for education**, guarantee the labor rights of teachers and staff in the public system, and provide a multicultural and multilingual education model for the inclusion of all ethnic groups.
- An **inclusive social-economic model** is needed by promoting local economic development, especially through programs focused in the rural economy, agriculture, and small businesses.

- Establish mechanisms, protocols, and rules to implement the current Migration Code and **strengthen the capacity of the Guatemalan Institute of Migration**.
- Create protocols to **assist the deported** and guarantee their social and economic integration.
- Guarantee the **proper management of asylum** requests and establish policies that protect migrants from vulnerable populations.

ABOUT THE CENTRAL AMERICA RESEARCH ALLIANCE

Since 2017, the Pulte Institute for Global Development's Central America Research Alliance (CARA) at the University of Notre Dame has convened a working group of universities and civil society organizations working on human rights, democracy and migration research in the United States, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Representatives of the group produce, curate and disseminate research in the region and in the United States to inform evidence-based policy and practice. This report was commissioned as part of a series on understanding emigration from the region. For more information visit pulte.nd.edu.

The **Group for the Promotion of Applied Research in Human Rights in Guatemala** (PIADH in Spanish) is an inter-institutional working group that formed as an organizing coalition and produced this report with support from Pulte-CARA.