

MORE FROM HOMEPAGE

President Joe Biden, many others expected to honor Eddie Bernice Johnson today in Dallas

National reactions from Cowboys' NFC East-clinching victory: 'The way we wanted it'

More than ever, Americans want revenge against the advantage of them

ADVERTISEMENT

OPINION

A slow-motion coup in Guatemala may still be ongoing

U.S. sanctions may be insufficient for President Bernardo Arévalo to succeed



A message on the street reads in Spanish "No to the Coup, Yes to Democracy," as police stood guard while Indigenous people marched in support of President-elect Bernardo Arevalo and his Seed Movement party, as prosecutors seek to strip Arévalo and members of his party of their immunity in Guatemala City, Nov. 21, 2023. The U.S. sanctioned more than a dozen officials, prosecutors, judges and businessmen from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador on Dec. 21, 2023 for undermining democracy and participating in serious acts of corruption. (AP Photo/Moises Castillo, File) (Moises Castillo / ASSOCIATED PRESS)

By Joyce Bennett
1:30 AM on Jan 5, 2024 CST



World leaders are watching, leisurely sipping their coffee as it were, while Guatemalan authorities enact what could be a coup in slow motion, undermining democracy and the right to vote. [That's what Human Rights Watch said of the current situation in Guatemala.](#)

In August, [Guatemalans elected Bernardo Arévalo](#) to be the next president in the most populous Central American nation at the southern border of Mexico. But his opponent, Sandra Torres, a right-wing conservative with ties to the genocidal military dictatorship of the 1980s, refused to concede. In fact, she and others, including the country's attorney general, have worked together so that other political parties will not work with Arévalo.

ADVERTISEMENT

Thankfully, Guatemalans and especially the working class and rural Indigenous populations, admittedly used to a certain level of corruption, have had enough. For the past months, they've taken to the streets, blocking regular travel and transportation of goods and produce.

They are demanding the resignation of Attorney General María Consuelo Porras, who tried to prevent Arévalo from taking office. They demand their votes to count. But their activism isn't enough. Porras hasn't budged an inch. This is why the United States needs to do more than revoke the visas of those complicit in this coup.

D Opinion

Get smart opinions on the topics North Texans care about.

SIGN UP

Or with:



By signing up you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

Arévalo is scheduled to take office on Jan. 14.

If we do not support democracy in Guatemala, we will continue a long legacy of U.S. intervention that places the lives and well-being of Guatemalans in peril. While we might not often think of Guatemalans, they are people who pick our raspberries, grow and process our coffee, and grow and harvest those specialty vegetables you find at holiday parties.

ADVERTISEMENT

They're also leaders in education in the region, home to important nutritional innovations, and leading producers of chemicals necessary for our increasingly technologized world. And the people we rely on for such products — Guatemalans — have clearly reached a breaking point. Given the ways we paved the way for this coup, it is our place to stand, for once, on the side of protecting Guatemalans in the name of democracy.

To be fair, the U.S. State Department has been [supporting anti-corruption work](#) in Guatemala, which Arévalo supports. U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken has been watching the post-election events closely. But the [sanctions the U.S. has enacted](#) — rescinding the visas of high-ranking officials supporting the slow-motion coup — are not enough.

The United States has a long history of undercutting democracy in Guatemala to protect our financial interests. Washington instigated a CIA-backed coup in 1954, supposedly to protect against communism; the U.S. supplied arms and munitions to the Guatemalan military during the civil war (1960-1996) and provided training for the elite military that carried out the worst violence of the genocide in the 1980s.

The peace that was brokered afterward stood on economic growth to support the Guatemalan population, growth that was to happen by increasing free-trade agreements with the United States, except that living conditions have deteriorated since then, with significant percentages of families barely able to survive. For many, fleeing to the United States is now the only option, except we have no legal means of immigration for most.

ADVERTISEMENT

Our policies, always in the name of protecting U.S. business interests and economic growth, have consistently come at the price of the lives and well-being of working-class Guatemalans.

We need to demand more from our governing officials. The diplomatic sanctions the U.S. has enacted are insufficient. Recent protests and blockades over the corruption and in support of Arévalo have shown that Guatemalans can and will shut down commerce to protect their democracy. A recent ruling by Guatemala’s high court ordering the nation’s “Congress to guarantee the effective inauguration of all elected officials” is encouraging, but the international community needs to keep the pressure.

Part of our series [The Unraveling of Latin America](#). This essay focuses on Guatemala’s presidential transition.

Joyce Bennett is an associate professor of anthropology at Connecticut College.

We welcome your thoughts in a letter to the editor. See the guidelines and [submit your letter here](#). If you have problems with the form, you can submit via email at letters@dallasnews.com



Joyce Bennett

Around The Web



Top Doctor: Use This Coffee Hack for Fat Loss in 2024 [Watch Now]

[Health](#)

MD: Do This Immediately if You Have Toenail Fungus (Watch)

[healthylifegazette](#)

Green Sea Discovery: Salt Hack Burns Fat Overnight

[MitoLean](#)

Podiatrist: Do This Immediately if You Have Neuropathic Pain

[neuroPro](#)

Exotic "Rice Method" Liquifies Fat Cells Almost Overnight (Watch Now)

[Fitter For Free](#)

Why This Bra for Elderly Ladies is Breaking All Connecticut Sales Records?

[Dotmalls](#)

Neuropathy Got You Down? Try This Bedtime Cure!

[Nervescure](#)

Simple Method "Ends" Tinnitus - Stops Ringing Ears (Watch)

[Healthy Living Reports](#)

Why Gynecologists Recommend This Anti-sagging, Comfortable, and Seamless Bra?

[Dotmalls](#)

TOP PICKS



Deadly Fake

30 Days Inside Fentanyl's Grip on North Texas



DFW Airport turns 50

One of America's key aviation hubs, then and now