



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Guatemalans Force Corrupt President and VP to Resign, 2015

April

2015

to: September

Country: Guatemala

Location City/State/Province: Guatemala City

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 4th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 5th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 037. Singing › sang national anthem
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › blocked highways

Methods in 6th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- indigenous peoples
- students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

#RenunciaYa

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- #RenunciaYa

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: 1 month

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Otto Perez Molina, Roxana Baldetti

Campaigner violence:

No campaigner violence.

Repressive Violence:

not known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

From 1960 to 1996, Guatemala was embroiled in a civil war fought between the government of Guatemala and the rural poor. In the early 1980s, under the leadership of military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, the Guatemalan military massacred 250,000 indigenous Mayans leaving deep wounds in Guatemalan society, which have contributed to the high murder and crime rates that continued to plague the country. Additionally, the government was famously corrupt; one non-governmental organization asserted that up to thirty percent of the annual national budget was lost to corruption. Historically, Guatemalans accepted the corruption and violence, as they remained afraid of the government.

Otto Perez Molina, a former general under Montt, became president of Guatemala in January 2012, despite allegations from Mayan organizations that he was involved in the mass murder of Mayan citizens during the 1980s. Roxanna Baldetti served as his vice president, and the pair were elected to serve until January 2016.

In early April 2015, Guatemalan and international prosecutors backed by the United Nations announced that they had issued arrest warrants for 22 people allegedly involved in a tax corruption scheme that had stolen millions of pesos from 2012 to 2015. Prosecutors issued several warrants for top government officials, including Baldetti's personal secretary.

Amidst the immediate media frenzy and national outrage, nine Guatemalan citizens with little organizing experience created a Facebook event that invited Guatemalan citizens to call for the resignation of Molina and Baldetti at a protest on 25 April in Constitution Square in front of the Presidential Palace in Guatemala City. They named it #RenunciaYa, which is translated as "Resign Already." They established ground rules for the protest by mandating that it had to be peaceful, it should end with the national anthem, and there could be no leaders: this was a people's protest. Additionally, no political party or other organized group was to be affiliated with the protest.

Though the organizers had initially expected no more than 100 people to attend, media attention helped to assemble 20,000 people at the protest. The protesters included a variety of professions and demographics. Some of the more prominent groups were indigenous peoples, students, businesspeople, and clergy. This protest was followed by a students' May Day (1 May) demonstration, which called for Molina and Baldetti's resignation.

In response to the mounting public pressure and the arrest of her secretary, Roxana Baldetti resigned on 8 May. Molina replaced her with Alejandro Maldonado. Because Molina was still in office, protests continued to occur every Saturday through the summer. The protesters continued to plan these protests on the #RenunciaYa Facebook page. Thousands of people attended these protests and would gather in Constitution Square, waving Guatemalan flags and chanting.

On 21 August, the Guatemalan attorney general, Thelma Aldana, presented evidence to the public indicating that Molina and Baldetti most likely led the ring of corruption. The police arrested Baldetti and a number of government officials. Two days later, #RenunciaYa organized another protest outside the presidential palace. A few hours later, the Roman Catholic Church called on Molina to resign. Molina immediately appeared on national television and radio and denied any involvement in the corruption scandal.

#RenunciaYa kicked off three straight days of non-stop nonviolent action on 25 August. Protesters marched on the capital, shut down major highways going into Guatemala City, staged protests, and gave speeches, all in an attempt to force Molina's resignation. Protesters waved the Guatemalan flag and dressed in blue and white, the national colors. On the final day of mass protests, 27 August, many universities shut down so that students could fully participate. Many businesses, including fast food chains, followed suit. People who could not participate uploaded pictures to Facebook and Twitter that showed them holding pieces of paper that had slogans such as #YoEstoyPorGuate ("I am for Guatemala") and #YoNoTengoPresidente ("I don't have a president"). These slogans were used frequently throughout the campaign.

On 2 September, when it became clear that the Guatemalan Congress would strip Molina of his prosecutorial immunity,

President Otto Perez Molina resigned. Later in the day, the police arrested him on charges of multi-million dollar fraud. Maldonado, the vice president, became Acting President, and the government scheduled national presidential elections for 6 September. On Election Day, no presidential candidate won more than fifty percent of the vote, so a run-off election was scheduled for 25 October. Jimmy Morales, a former television comedian won the subsequent election.

#RenunciaYa continued to serve as a forum for protests against governmental corruption and injustice in Guatemala.

Research Notes

Influences:

This campaign prompted a similar #RenunciaYa campaign in Honduras against President Juan Orlando Hernandez

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Additional Notes:

#RenunciaYa continued to serve as a forum for protests against governmental corruption and injustice in Guatemala.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Irina Bukharin, 25/10/2015

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