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Guatemalan Migration in Times of Civil War and Post-War Challenges

During recent decades, large-scale international migration has become an external escape valve, a response to Guatemala's multiple internal problems. This pattern emerged during the most violent phase of Guatemala's 36-year civil war (1960-96), which generated significant refugee flows beginning in the late 1970s. More recently, in the post-war era, international migration continued in response to Guatemala's severe and continuing socioeconomic problems, successive natural disasters, increasing social violence — and a weak state, lacking the vision, capacity, and resources to resolve these problems internally. Migration to the United States has also included family reunification, although in lower numbers.

What differentiates the case of Guatemala from other Central American migrant-sending countries is the high level of ethnic diversity of Guatemalan society — principally, indigenous Maya and ladino (mixed). In Guatemala itself, Mayas constituted by far the majority of victims during the war. In addition, virtually all statistical data show that the Mayan population has experienced historical and ongoing discrimination, segregation, higher indicators of poverty, and far less access to resources and services such as land, education, and health care. Not surprisingly, then, we can distinguish two migration streams from Guatemala, Mayan and ladino, although there are no reliable or precise statistics on the breakdown.

This article traces the development of large-scale Guatemalan migration to the United States during both the long civil war and the post-war era. It focuses on the dominant factors spurring the ongoing migration and the dynamics of each period, as well as US government immigration policies affecting Guatemalans. The article also examines the impacts of migration within Guatemala, including the challenges posed by sizable deportations of migrants by the US and Mexican governments. Finally, the article locates Guatemalan migration within a regional context, with particular emphasis on Guatemala/Mexico migration dynamics.

Sources of Guatemalan Migration during the Civil War Period

Guatemala experienced Central America's longest and most violent civil war, between leftist insurgents and the armed forces of successive governments. The first phase of the civil war came to a head with a major counterinsurgency campaign by the army in 1966-68,

mainly in the Eastern ladino region, as well as targeted assassinations and threats against opposition leaders in Guatemala City. However, this wave of repression did not lead to significant migration to the United States. Rather, the 1960s phase sparked a trickle of political emigrants primarily to Mexico, joining a pre-existing diaspora of largely professional, middle-class Guatemalan political exiles in Mexico City.

During the second phase of the war, centered in the western Mayan highlands, the first large-scale migration began in the late 1970s. The conflict sparked a flood of refugees, overwhelmingly Mayan, across the border with Mexico, with thousands ending up in refugee camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in southern Mexico. Some of these forcibly displaced Guatemalans continued to the United States, seeking asylum from political or ethnic persecution. Technically, they were de facto refugees because, although most were fleeing persecution, they were not granted refugee status in either Mexico or the United States.

What spurred their displacement and flight? In response to organizing efforts (e.g., self-help networks that emerged after a massive 1976 earthquake), and a heightened sense of Mayan identity in many highlands communities, the Guatemalan army regarded the Mayan population per se as subversive, and supportive of the leftist insurgency, which by the late 1970s was operating in the Mayan highlands. In the early 1980s, state security forces responded with a massive scorched-earth counterinsurgency war and engaged in acts of genocide that were later well documented as such in authoritative reports by Guatemala's Truth Commission (Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico, Historical Clarification Commission) and by the Catholic Church Archbishop's Human Rights Office.

According to the army's own figures, its operations destroyed 440 highlands villages during the most intense period (1981-83). Some 150,000 (primarily highlands Mayas) were killed or "disappeared" in the early 1980s alone — part of a larger total of over 200,000 from 1954 through 1996. Additionally, around 1 million Mayan villagers were internally displaced, and some 200,000 fled over the border to southern Mexico (46,000 in UNHCR camps, the other 75 percent outside the camps).

Even in the non-conflict zones, the violence disrupted highlands commercial/trade patterns, causing many to lose their livelihoods. At the national level, the Guatemalan economy was in crisis, as a consequence of the "Lost Decade" of the 1980s that affected virtually all of Latin America, generating massive unemployment and underemployment. The Guatemalan economy also suffered by being virtually cut off from international economic assistance, in response to the army's brutality. Given the close relationship between the war and the economy during the 1980s, migration from Guatemala increased significantly for a combination of political and economic reasons.

Even prior to the 1970s and 1980s (in fact, for decades), there had been a long-standing labor flow back and forth across the Guatemalan/Mexican border, some of it by laborers on a daily circuit or seasonal basis. There also was some labor migration to the United States during the war years, although large-scale migration began only in the late 1970s. Both of these labor flows were obscured, however, by the high profile of refugees until the civil war was ended with the Peace Accords signed on December 29, 1996.

The number of Guatemalan immigrants to the United States (including both estimated unauthorized and legally admitted) during the civil war years rose from 13,785 in 1977 to 45,917 at the peak in 1989, subsequently decreasing to 22,081 in 1996, according to figures from the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) analyzed by Nestor Rodríguez. INS statistics also showed that Guatemalans constituted by far the highest number of asylum petitioners in the United States in fiscal year 1992 – 43,915 – or 42 percent of all applications.

Post-War Labor Migration to the United States

It was during the post-war period (1997 to the present) that the number of Guatemalan immigrants became more significant as a percentage of the foreign-born population in the United States. This was not yet the case for Guatemalans as of the 2000 Census. But by the 2010 Census — even before, beginning in 2009 — Guatemalans were tied with Dominicans as the ninth and tenth largest foreign-born populations (around 2 percent each). Guatemalans remained tenth in 2011, at 2.1 percent, with the official US estimate of nearly 851,000. The Guatemala office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM – OIM in Spanish), on the other hand, projected over 1.5 million Guatemalan migrants in the United States the previous year, in 2010.

In contrast to the late 1970s through 1996, post-war Guatemalan migrants have been mostly labor migrants, many of them building on family and community contacts with immigrants and refugees already in the United States. Even among those who fled because of the war, a return home was not likely; a 1995 survey of 600 Salvadorans and Guatemalans in the Los Angeles and the San Francisco areas, in which this author participated, found that almost none were planning to return to their home country after the end of the war. Their overwhelming reason was the lack of decent jobs and economic opportunities in the home country.

Guatemalan experts have analyzed the major problems of the labor market. An increasing share of jobs has been considered and referred to as "precarious" – insecure, unstable, part-time, with subminimum wage levels and no social benefits. Studies by the Guatemalan office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP – or PNUD in Spanish), the Bank of Guatemala, and various research institutions have documented that between two-thirds and three-quarters of the economically active population worked in the informal sector throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. The creation of decent jobs at home has not been a policy priority for successive post-war governments, leading to underemployment as well as open unemployment. There has also been a deficiency of job training programs to elevate the skill level of the labor force.

In addition to the precarious labor market, Guatemala has been among the countries with the highest levels of socioeconomic inequality in the world. Moreover, its level of human development is the lowest in the entire Latin American region; worldwide, Guatemala ranks 131st of 187 countries according to the United Nations' 2012 Human Development Index. And while Guatemala is not overall the poorest Central American country, poverty and extreme poverty persist in both its urban and rural settings. Migration has been seen as

a survival strategy — or an opportunity for above-subsistence jobs and possible upward mobility — for Guatemalans who have the resources to finance the trip to the United States (e.g., to pay coyotes).

Post-War Environmental Disasters, Pervasive Social Violence, and Femicide

In addition to labor migration in the post-war era, the factors propelling increased migration included several environmental disasters affecting Guatemala since the late 1990s — Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Hurricane Stan in 2005, Hurricane Agatha and other environmental events in 2010-11, and a powerful earthquake affecting the Pacific southern coast in 2012. In contrast with Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Nicaraguans, however, Guatemalans have never been granted the relief of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in the United States following these disasters.

On another dimension, well into the post-war era, Guatemala has experienced an accumulation of uncontrolled social violence. In addition to high levels of common crime, Guatemalans have been subjected increasingly to violent and coercive practices stemming from the operations of drug traffickers, organized-crime rings, gangs, and clandestine paramilitary organizations. The levels of coercion (e.g., entire communities being forced to participate in the drug trade) and the extreme structural violence of Guatemalan society have been documented in studies by Guatemalan, Central American and US-based institutions, including the Migration Policy Institute's Regional Migration Study Group. Some Central American analysts refer to these factors as causing "forced displacement from violence and crime" or "forced migration."

Furthermore, since 2000, Guatemala has had one of the world's highest rates of femicide (assassinations specifically targeted against women, often accompanied by rape, torture, and bodily mutilation) — more than 6,500 reported cases between 2000 and 2011. Government officials and institutions have demonstrated a refusal or unwillingness to investigate the overwhelming majority of these cases. Some specialized institutions such as the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, at the University of California Hastings College of the Law, are developing the case for asylum from femicide, as well as from gang violence that also involves domestic violence against young women.

The Role of the Weak State in Guatemalan Migration

Many Guatemalan experts and those working at UN agencies in Guatemala have concluded that these post-war factors are evidence of a structurally weak Guatemalan state, i.e., a state that lacks the authority, capacity, and political will as well as the financial resources to attend to the needs of the population. It also lacks strong political institutions such as stable political parties, an effective Congress, and a functional judicial system. We refer to this as "structural" because none of Guatemala's governments during the last six decades, independently of their ideological orientation and their military or civilian character, have been able to resolve, or even to develop policies addressing the massive problems of societal and citizen insecurity at home.

There is also a generalized consensus among Guatemalan and UN experts that one reason for the weak post-war state has been the non-implementation of a crucial provision in the 1996 Peace Accords for a tax reform that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), among other institutions, pressured Guatemala to adopt. This reform, under which taxes would contribute 12 percent to gross domestic product (still a low rate), was seen as essential to generate resources needed to strengthen and increase the state's ability to provide basic services. However, in the face of persistent, strong resistance, particularly from the country's business elites, no such reform has been enacted.

It is worth mentioning these deficiencies of the weak post-war state – which the UNDP in Guatemala made the focus of its entire Human Development Report for 2009-10 — because they affect virtually all aspects of the lives of Guatemalan migrants and the migration process: initial migration and, as will be seen, transit through Mexico, life and work in the United States, and (non)-reintegration of deportees.

Rise of Women and Unaccompanied Child Migrants from Guatemala

Even as the majority of Guatemalan migrants have been working-age males, the number of female migrants has risen. One reason for this increase is the high unemployment and underemployment that women face in Guatemala. In the migration process through Mexico, women have suffered particular gendered vulnerabilities to attack. Rape has become rampant, almost routine, for female transmigrants, and they take contraceptive measures as part of preparation for the journey. Women have also been the victims of forced recruitment and trafficking as sex slaves.

For Guatemalan women who have migrated on their own (not as spouses), who make it to the United States and avoid deportation, many have come to lead relatively successful lives. Case studies in particular contexts have demonstrated their ability to find steady, although often low-wage work. Those who are mothers with primary responsibility for child-rearing have generally interacted intensively with their children and the children's schools and networks, hence providing for some continuity with the next generation and contact with broader communities. The experiences of Guatemalan migrant women as heads of households in the United States have given many of them an independent self-image and identity.

A further characteristic of Guatemalan migration by 2011-12 has been the increasing number of unaccompanied children. Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, and Honduras are the world's four top countries of origin for unaccompanied child migration to the United States. Taken together, these four groups constituted 98 percent of unaccompanied children to the United States who were apprehended during the first half of 2012. Many of the unaccompanied minors are seeking asylum from coerced recruitment by gangs or persecution by traffickers or smugglers. Some seek work, seeing no jobs or economic future for themselves in Guatemala, while still others migrate in search of their parents already in the United States.

At the same time that migration by unaccompanied minors has grown so rapidly in recent years, the UNDP office in Guatemala has featured the rise of youth as a significant social

actor in the country. Asking what kind of Guatemala today's youth will inherit, the UNDP focused its entire 2011-12 Human Development Report on the difficult conditions facing youth in Guatemala, including the particular vulnerabilities they confront when they migrate.

Whatever their reasons for migrating, however, many of the children who arrive in the United States face frustration in achieving their goals. According to a study by the Women's Refugee Commission, in 2011-12 alone, there was a 50 percent increase in the number of unaccompanied unauthorized youth, primarily Central Americans, being held in US detention centers.

Guatemalans Affected by Post-1996 US Enforcement Policies

These conditions of increasing post-war Guatemalan migration have coincided with significant new enforcement measures affecting unauthorized immigrants in the United States from the mid-1990s to the present, and the denial of public services and benefits to legal permanent residents. These restrictions began in 1996, with enactment of three major bills concerning immigration or containing immigrant-focused provisions: the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), the welfare reform law, and the anti-terrorism law. In the wake of 9/11, some of these measures were expanded in the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act, as immigration and counterterrorism policies were often conflated. Immigration enforcement took on growing momentum after 9/11, and particularly after the creation in 2003 of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which incorporated immigration-related functions formerly carried out by the INS into divisions of the new department.

Deportations, which increased significantly during the Bush administration, have continued to rise under the Obama administration, ensnaring many Guatemalans among the more or less 400,000 unauthorized immigrants deported annually from fiscal years 2009 through 2012. Notably, while Guatemalans were 2 percent of the foreign born in 2010, they constituted 5 percent of unauthorized immigrants in the United States, according to DHS 2010 estimates. Thousands of Guatemalans have felt the impact of deportations, in family separation and disrupted lives.

Guatemalan immigrants in the United States became more visible after 2006 because they were the majority of deportees in several high-profile mass workplace raids. The largest and most prominent was the May 2008 raid at the Agriprocessors kosher meat-packing plant in Postville, Iowa by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Three-quarters of the nearly 400 migrants rounded up for deportation were Guatemalan, mainly Mayas who did not understand Spanish or English. They were accused of aggravated identity theft for using Social Security numbers that were not legally theirs; after being pressured to plead guilty, most were rapidly deported. As the details emerged, this raid sparked significant public concern.

The total number of Guatemalans deported from the United States increased from 1,763 in 1995 to 4,543 in 2000, and reached a record 30,313 in 2011, according to INS and DHS statistics. Many have arrived in Guatemala on US planes in chains, a visible symbol of

humiliation. Furthermore, the Guatemalan government has virtually no programs for their reintegration. The few incipient reintegration initiatives for deportees come from private agencies.

In the absence of anything comparable with El Salvador's *Bienvenido a Casa* ("Welcome Home") program, Guatemalan deportees are generally left to their own devices, with the result that many appear as "failures" (some having incurred new debts), rather than as respected providers of remittances. Having no job prospects and sometimes no community or family assistance, some make new attempts to migrate.

However, in sharp contrast to the above scenarios, some Guatemalan migrants return voluntarily, having succeeded in the United States.

Authorized Immigrants and Legalization Campaigns by Guatemalan Migrant-Rights Organizations

Not all Guatemalan migrants arrive or remain unauthorized and vulnerable in the United States. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) allowed around 50,000 Guatemalans to gain legal status, and some became citizens. Since that time, Guatemalan lawful permanent residents (LPRs) and citizens have been able to gain legal admittance for family members, which suggests a measure of increasing integration into US society. In addition, NACARA legalizations for ABC-status Guatemalans, which count as legal admissions, have added to the ranks of authorized Guatemalan immigrants. Most of those cases were approved, although they were not resolved until the early 2000s. The highest number of legal admissions and legalizations was registered in 2006 (nearly 24,000).

Beyond what was won from the US government through legal admissions and NACARA, US-based Guatemalan migrant-rights organizations and networks have organized campaigns for legalization, primarily since 1997. With the war over, many Guatemalan activists turned their attention from war-time issues to the situation of immigrants. The organizations focused largely on goals such as NACARA parity (treatment equivalent to that of Nicaraguans) and TPS; although these were not won, the campaigns made these issues more visible and mobilized some Guatemalans grassroots community activities.

In addition to working with much larger, more established, and better-funded Salvadoran organizations and networks, the Guatemalan networks have participated in pan-Latino campaigns for immigrant and refugee rights, comprehensive immigration reform, and various approaches to legalization. They also began to coordinate with counterpart organizations in Guatemala (see below). By 2005, and continuing to the present, there have been three national US-based Guatemalan networks (known by their acronyms as CONGUATE, MIGUA, and RPDG), generally led by ladinos. In addition, various Mayan organizations and networks around the United States have included immigrant rights in their agendas.

Remittances

A significant percentage of Guatemala's population of nearly 15 million relies on remittances from US-based migrant relatives to meet basic needs. According to Bank of Guatemala figures, remittances rose significantly between 2001 (\$584 million) and 2005 (almost \$3 billion). This increased to \$4.3 billion in 2008, when, according to the Guatemalan office of the IOM, they contributed more than 11 percent of GDP. Remittances declined in 2009, because of the economic recession in the United States, but recovered to \$4.4 billion by 2011.

These remittances sustain some sectors of the population and keep them from falling into extreme poverty; according to the IOM, they sustained 30 percent of population in 2008. The UNDP Guatemalan office found in its 2007-08 Human Development Report that remittances reduced the severity, but not the incidence, of poverty among the population. There have been growing debates about how to view the dependence on remittances as such a central part of the government's economic development strategy, and about their impact on broader human development at both the local and national levels.

The Mixed Record of the Guatemalan Government

Overall, successive post-war Guatemalan governments have not been proactive in protecting the welfare of Guatemalan migrants in Mexico and the United States, or of deportees. The 1998 Ley de Migración (Migration Law) is seriously out of date and does not address many of the key issues of the early 21st century. Although the government created a Vice Ministry for Migrant Affairs (within the Foreign Ministry) in 2006, its level of activity has been inconsistent. Meanwhile, in the United States, some of the government's consulates, functioning under the Foreign Ministry, have actively assisted Guatemalans in their regions, for example by issuing identity cards and operating "cónsul móvil" or "roving consulate" services.

The Guatemalan Congress, and particularly its Comisión de Migrantes (Committee on Migrants), has taken some initiatives since creation of the committee in 2004. Congress approved a new Consejo Nacional de Atención al Migrante de Guatemala en el Exterior (CONAMIGUA – National Council for Attention to Guatemalan Migrants Abroad) in 2007. CONAMIGUA began to function in 2008, including representation not only from various ministries and entities of the Guatemalan government, but also from non-state migrant organizations in US cities with significant Guatemalan immigrant populations.

On paper, the creation of CONAMIGUA appeared to be an advance, but in practice, its accomplishments have been limited by partisan infighting, alleged corruption, and insufficient long-range vision or resources to make a real difference in the lives of migrants and deportees. Various Regional Migration Study Group analysts, including Francisco Alba and Manuel ángel Castillo, have observed that the governmental structures appear to exist, but are not functional. As a result, by late 2012, the congressional committee was holding a series of hearings on reforms to the 1998 Migration Law and to CONAMIGUA. The hearings also addressed Guatemala's treatment of other Central Americans as they pass through or work in Guatemala, and proposed measures of protection against abuses.

Guatemalan Civil Society: Migrant Advocacy Organizations and Networks

Given this very mixed record on the part of governmental institutions, another social actor has played an important role since the late 1990s: Guatemalan civil society. The first migrant advocacy network was the Scalabrinian Missionaries, a world-wide congregation/order of the Catholic Church dedicated to providing shelter and protection to international migrants and speaking out on behalf of their rights. In Guatemala they worked with other institutions of the Catholic Church. They also established a network of "Casas del Migrante," shelters at Mexico's northern and southern border crossing points and other dangerous areas for transmigrants, including Guatemala City.

A broad network of well-established human rights, labor union, health, and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as research centers and university departments came together in 1999 to form the network, Mesa Nacional para las Migraciones en Guatemala (MENAMIG – National Forum for Migration in Guatemala). Also included were the Scalabrinians and the semi-official Human Rights Ombudsman's Office. MENAMIG has actively lobbied the government on virtually all aspects of migration policy and remains a player in all debates. Another important research/advocacy institution has been the Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Sociales y Desarrollo (INCEDES – Central American Institute for Social Studies and Development). Among multiple other activities, INCEDES has worked with a unit of the Colegio de México on binational activities at the Guatemala/Mexico border, such as monitoring the treatment of migrants in the border area and proposing policy improvements.

In addition to urging the government to develop more proactive and comprehensive migration policies, all of these organizations have criticized the Guatemalan government's neoliberal socio-economic policies, arguing that "migration should be a choice, not a necessity." They have also promoted public education and awareness about migration issues – e.g., through a high-profile "Migrants' Week" and "Migrants' Day" every September. Beyond Guatemala, they have participated in regional networks, as well as coordinating with the US-based Guatemalan migrant networks and with Mexican counterpart organizations.

Guatemalan Migration in a Regional Context: Relations with Mexico

Guatemala is part of a migration region that includes both Mexico to the north and the rest of Central America, particularly the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras). Most important in this regional context have been the Guatemala/Mexico border and Guatemala's multidimensional relations with Mexico. The transit experience for unauthorized Guatemalan migrants to the United States has always been heavily impacted by the long and dangerous journey beginning at the Guatemala-Mexico border, a kind of no-man's land at various crossing points, through Mexico, and across the Mexico-US border. Mexican government authorities (police, army, migration agents) have always played a crucial role in the outcomes for Guatemalan migrants, but in recent years, they have often become more predatory. It should be noted that not all Guatemalans are

transmigrants; as Alba and Castillo point out, some Guatemalans detained in Mexico have stated in surveys that Mexico is their destination.

In the early 1980s, Mexico had permitted the presence of UNHCR refugee camps for Guatemalan Mayas in southern Mexico. Since the early 1990s, by contrast, largely in collaboration with the US government, Mexico has engaged in deportations of Guatemalans and other transit Central Americans. Furthermore, throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, Mexico deported all Central Americans it apprehended across its southern border, to Guatemala.

Even after Mexico stopped that practice and deported non-Guatemalans to their home countries, Guatemalans have been by far the highest number of Mexican "devoluciones" of Central Americans (literally, "deportation events," as Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Migración [National Migration Institute, INM] counts them, sometimes involving the same person more than once). More than 200,000 deportations of Guatemalans occurred in the period 2001-2003. During the period 2004-06, Guatemalans were close to 45 percent of all Mexican deportations (in 2005, the number reached 99,000). In 2011, there were more than 31,000 deportations of Guatemalans.

Aside from deportations, Guatemalan migrants have encountered a host of predatory forces in Mexico. In recent years, this has included powerful drug-trafficking and organized-crime rings, as well as gangs. These realities burst into worldwide public view with the August 2010 massacre of 72 migrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, relatively close to the US-Mexico border. "Los 72," mostly Central Americans and a few South Americans, were executed when they resisted demands to participate in activities of the Zeta drug ring. This was by no means the first or the only such incident of a mass crime against migrants and transmigrants, but its scale and brutality were unprecedented at the time.

The vulnerabilities of Central American transmigrants in Mexico have also resulted in several thousand "disappearances," kidnappings, and killings of Central Americans in recent years, by traffickers in drugs and other commodities. The practices of "trata" (human trafficking – a human-rights violation) and "tráfico ilícito" (illegal smuggling of humans – a violation of the law) have become major issues in Mexico and throughout the region.

A number of the issues mentioned above were addressed and slated for correction in Mexico's 2011 migration law, for which final regulations were issued in November 2012. It is too early as of this writing to project how much Mexico's new immigration law will change on-the-ground realities, as pointed out by analysts such as Alba and Castillo.

At the same time, other major social actors in Mexico have undertaken crucial humanitarian activities, upholding migrant rights, protecting and providing shelters and safe havens to transmigrants. The Scalabrinians led the way, with their networks of Casas del Migrante. Mexican activist organizations have worked with Central American families to organize caravans of mothers searching for their children who "disappeared" while migrating through Mexico. Another research/advocacy NGO, Instituto de Estudios y Divulgación sobre Migración (INEDIM), together with INCEDES in Guatemala, has worked to reframe discussions about the regional migration context by developing a sophisticated notion of

migrant security, as opposed to national security, as the guiding principle for migration policy.

Guatemala as a Country of Transit or Destination in the Central American Subregion

Viewing Guatemala in a regional context also includes its borders with El Salvador and Honduras in the subregion of Central America's Northern Triangle. Guatemala is a country of transit for other Central American migrants; it is also a country of destination for some workers from neighboring countries, just as those countries are for some Guatemalan workers. The treatment of those other Central Americans, including deportees from Guatemala, has become a major focus of debate in Guatemala. In a 2008 report, the UNHCR Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Migrants, Dr. Jorge Bustamante, was highly critical of Guatemala as well as Mexico for abuses against transmigrants.

Conclusion

Guatemalan migration from the civil war and post-war periods has profoundly transformed many communities within Guatemala, and the country as a whole, but it is still too early to assess whether these changes have in any way advanced human development in Guatemala. Among the broad issues for a longer-range assessment are questions such as: Can human development needs be met in Guatemala, so that migration becomes voluntary rather than necessary? And what are the human consequences for individual Guatemalans and their communities of the migration processes that are almost certain to continue?