

## DISCRIMINATION

In a landmark verdict in October, an Athens court found the political leadership of far-right party Golden Dawn guilty of running a criminal organization. Golden Dawn members committed a series of violent crimes, including attacks against refugees, migrants, trade unionists and human rights defenders. Forty-three party members, including 11 former Members of Parliament, were convicted for participating in a criminal organization. Golden Dawn member Giorgos Roupakias was convicted of the murder of anti-fascist singer Pavlos Fyssas in 2013, and 15 other defendants were convicted as accessories. The court convicted five people of the attempted murder of an Egyptian fisherman and four defendants for the attack against trade unionists from the Greek Communist Party.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In July, NGOs, trade unions and political parties expressed serious concerns over a controversial bill regulating public assemblies. The bill became law on 11 July and included a provision establishing liability for the organizers of an assembly.<sup>3</sup>

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Serious violations of the rights of conscientious objectors continued, including repeated prosecutions, fines and trials in military courts. In October, a 45-year-old conscientious objector whose application for conscientious objector's status had been rejected in 2004 by the Minister of National Defence, was acquitted on procedural grounds by a military court.

Procedures for the examination of applications on conscientious objectors' status were suspended for nearly 15 months before a reformed Committee, tasked to examine such applications, started operating in July. An appeal against a 2019 increase to the length of alternative service before the Supreme Administrative Court was pending at the end of the year.

## RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Prison inmate and university student Vasilis Dimakis went on hunger and thirst strike in April and May, protesting that his transfer to Grevena prison and then to an isolation cell in the female ward of Korydallos prison prevented him from continuing his university education. Vasilis Dimakis ended his strike at the end of May. Following pressure from civil society, he was returned to his original cell in Korydallos prison, where he was able to continue his studies.

## CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT

In a report published on 9 April, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture highlighted systemic failures in Greece's prisons. On the same day, a female prisoner died in Eleonas prison; fellow inmates reported that she had not received adequate medical attention. Prisoners around the country told the Initiative for Detainees' Rights that they were not provided with personal protective equipment against COVID-19.

1. [Greece: COVID-19 crisis exposes urgent need to bolster austerity-ravaged health system \(News story 27 April\)](#)
2. [Europe: Caught in a political game: asylum-seekers and migrants on the Greece/Turkey border pay the price for Europe's failures \(EUR 01/2077/2020\)](#)
3. [Greece: Blanket ban on public assemblies must be urgently revoked \(EUR 25/3346/2020\)](#)

# GUATEMALA

## Republic of Guatemala

Head of state and government: **Alejandro Giammattei Falla (replaced Jimmy Morales Cabrera in January)**

**Thousands of people were detained for breaching the curfew ordered in March by the government to contain the spread of COVID-19. Health workers faced difficult working conditions during the pandemic, often lacking personal protective equipment and in some cases work contracts or wages.**

**Attacks on human rights defenders increased and Congress passed a law that threatens the right to defend human rights.**

### **FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 4 March the government declared a “state of calamity”, followed on 16 March by border closures and a mandatory curfew. According to the authorities, more than 40,000 people were detained for curfew violations during the first six months this was in force. The media reported that people with no choice but to keep working in the informal economy were detained. A possible extrajudicial execution at the hands of the police in the capital, Guatemala City, was also reported during curfew on 17 June.

### **RIGHT TO HEALTH – HEALTH WORKERS**

Health workers worked under precarious conditions during the pandemic, and repeatedly reported the lack of personal protective equipment in hospitals. In early May, a group of doctors from the temporary hospital set up in Guatemala City's Parque de la Industria to care for patients with COVID-19 reported that they had been working without a contract or pay since the beginning of the pandemic.

### **RIGHT TO FOOD AND WATER**

The lockdown measures exacerbated the precarious economic situation of many households in Guatemala, which already had one of the highest rates of chronic child malnutrition in the region. White flags were placed in windows of people's homes as a sign that they had no food and people stood in long lines to receive food from solidarity initiatives such as the Community Pot in Guatemala City. The Ombudsperson and the media reported that several neighbourhoods and communities did not have access to water, preventing people from adopting adequate hygiene practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The devastating impact of hurricanes Iota and Eta, which affected more than two million people in November,

led to fears of a worsening of the food and sanitary crises.

### **MIGRANTS' RIGHTS**

As of November, more than 41,000 Guatemalans who had fled violence, poverty and inequality were returned to Guatemala from Mexico and the USA. The first temporary shelters set up to receive returnees and test them for COVID-19 did not always meet the minimum requirements for housing people.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

According to the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA), a local human rights organization, attacks against human rights defenders increased in 2020 compared to previous years, with a total of 1,004 attacks recorded as of 15 December. Those who defend land, territory and the environment were particularly at risk.

This group, women defending sexual and reproductive rights and those fighting impunity and corruption were also the targets of unfounded criminal complaints and proceedings, as part of the misuse of the criminal justice system to harass and punish them for their activities. The Ombudsperson faced several criminal complaints and requests for his removal in reprisal for his activities.

In September, an appeals court increased the prison sentence against prisoner of conscience Bernardo Caal Xol, who had been deprived of his liberty since January 2018 for defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples affected by the construction of the OXEC hydroelectric dam project.

In general, the vast majority of attacks on human rights defenders remained unpunished. By the end of the year, Guatemala had yet to adopt the public policy for the protection of human rights defenders ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2014.

Despite multiple concerns expressed by UN human rights bodies and international and local organizations, in February Congress

amended the law on NGOs. Decree 4-2020 added conditions for the functioning of NGOs and could lead to their arbitrary closure. However, implementation was halted due to an appeal pending before the Constitutional Court.

### **EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE**

On 21 November, the National Civil Police used excessive force to repress protests in Guatemala City. They made unnecessary and indiscriminate use of tear gas and water canon against protesters and passers-by and violently arrested dozens of people, including journalists.

### **IMPUNITY**

The future of the fight against impunity in cases of corruption and human rights violations remained at risk. On several occasions, prosecutors, judges and magistrates who had worked on emblematic cases of the fight against impunity were targeted with criminal complaints and intense media smear campaigns also aimed at discrediting them.

This fight against impunity was also at the heart of struggles to select new magistrates for the Supreme Court of Justice and the Courts of Appeals. The process, which had been pending since 2019, was again delayed because of a new corruption scandal and delays in the vote by Congress.

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Despite high levels of gender-based violence against women and girls, organizations denounced the lack of funding to temporary shelters known as Comprehensive Support Centres for Women Survivors of Violence (CAIMUS) and mobilized against the government's intention to close the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM) and replace it with a lower-ranking commission.

The investigation into the death of 41 girls during a fire at the state-run shelter Virgin of the Assumption Safe House in March 2017 remained pending. None of those accused or

suspected of responsibility had been convicted by the end of the year.

## **GUINEA**

---

**Republic of Guinea**

Head of state: **Alpha Condé**

Head of government: **Ibrahima Kassory Fofana**

---

**Human rights violations were carried out in the context of controversial constitutional change and disputed presidential election results. Dozens of people were killed by members of defence and security forces during demonstrations, while alleged perpetrators enjoyed impunity. Members of opposition political parties and pro-democracy activists were arbitrarily arrested and detained. The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were restricted. Prisoners' rights to health were undermined by chronic overcrowding and poor detention conditions.**

### **BACKGROUND**

From March, a state of emergency was imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and measures introduced restricting movement and the right to assembly, among other things.

In March, the National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC), a coalition of political parties and civil society organizations, organized mass protests against a constitutional reform project that would allow the President to run for a third term, and called for a boycott of the legislative elections and constitutional referendum, both of which were held on 22 March. In April, the Constitutional Court announced that almost 90% had voted for the constitutional reform.

On 24 October, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that Alpha Condé had won the presidential elections, despite one contender, Cellou Dalein Diallo, having already claimed victory.