

Judge Galvez and his appointment with History

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The mission of a Guatemalan judge whose commitment to justice challenges the mafias.

The capture of the Guatemalan State, perpetrated by the mafias in power, is total and public. The three powers - Executive, Legislative and Judicial - have already been invaded by those who intend to transform a weak democracy into a dictatorship, but not with the purpose of governing, but with the perverse intention of completely destroying its institutionality in full. For this purpose, it counts on 'hired guns' organised by obscure military and businessmen, whose determination is to revive the violent times that led that country to the internal armed conflict that lasted more than 36 years.

Threats against those who are still trying to stop this collapse, go across all public spaces with absolute brazenness; and attempts against the lives of justice operators, journalists, social activists and civil organizations are part of a new order of things. The immediate consequence is the exile of many of them, forced to leave their homes and their country to save their lives.

In the midst of this chaos, the honorable Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez has become one of the last bastions of the rule of law in Guatemala. Armed with his solid knowledge of the law, an unwavering integrity and a deep commitment to justice, tackling some of the most impactful prosecutions of recent years. Among them, the painful cases of the Indigenous women raped in Sepur Zarco, and the *Diario Militar* - the death squad diary, with the records of thousands of detainees, disappeared and murdered between 1983 and 1985 - which involve former members of the Army and constitute shocking evidence of the horrendous crimes committed by the State with the complicity of the business elite, before the silence of the international community.

The fact of bringing to trial an important group of former high-ranking military officers represents an act of extreme courage in a country overwhelmed by the mafias in all of its institutions, but especially in those such as the Public Ministry and the Courts of Justice, from where corruption and impunity are arranged. This has meant the death sentence - made public by one of those close to power - for an upright judge such as Miguel Ángel Gálvez, as well as the exile of justice operators whose impeccable performance exposed the networks of corruption that undermine the rule of law.

The loss of institutional bases has not been fully assessed by the citizenry. If the most powerful sectors, and the urban middle classes, believe that with impunity and a free hand to perpetrate all kinds of acts of corruption, the country can survive, they are wrong. The last two administrations broke records and put an end to any possibility of a return to democracy.

What is needed now is a resounding citizen reaction to such a loss. Walking alongside the honourable Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez is a civic duty. This defender of justice has had more than one date with history during the carrying out of his difficult work as a jurist, leaving the indelible mark of honourability, ethics and love for the country. For Guatemala, the possibility of his exile would be like closing the last chapter, officially declaring the death of the State and thus handing over the entire command to his worst enemies.

Honour resides in commitment, ethics and the conviction to do the right thing.