

83% of Guatemalans Live in Extreme Poverty



United Nations, November 21 (RHC)-- A staggering 83 percent of Guatemalans live in extreme poverty, a United Nations official said during his two-day visit to the Central American country. "46.5 percent of girls and boys under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition, affecting not only their physical health but also their life chances," the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said in a statement.

The UN official said that Guatemalans live two different realities, one that is modern and functional while the other where people's rights are violated. A minority of the population controls the political and economic power in the country whereas a vast majority suffers from discrimination, impunity, corruption and other human rights violations.

"Only a small minority concentrates economic and political power, but the great majority of the people, and particularly women, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, migrants and people with disabilities suffer not only from poverty, but also from discrimination, impunity, corruption and human rights violations," the UN commissioner said in a statement.

He also expressed concern over the human rights abuses suffered by the Indigenous peoples in the country, Mayas, Xincas and Garífunas, along with the Indigenous organizations in Solola where people suffered eviction and were forcibly displaced. The U.N. high commissioner urged the government to ensure the Indigenous peoples are included in decisions affecting them and are fully consulted.

He said: "The representatives of indigenous peoples stressed that they do not oppose development, but rather those who exploit their land under the pretext of development."

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