

U.S. pressures new Guatemalan president to implement asylum pact



Washington, August 19 (RHC)-- The United States is pressuring the new Guatemalan government to implement the previously-signed bilateral immigration agreement, in spite of protests of concern over the accord by president-elect Alejandro Giammattei.

However, the concerns of the 63-year-old incoming president were not taken into account by Mauricio Claver-Carone, a Latin American advisor to U.S. Trump administration, who published a White House statement Friday praising the deal that will make Guatemala a 'safe third country', as highly beneficial to the Central American nation.

Claver-Carone listed the numerous bonuses that lay ahead for Guatemala once the controversial Safe Third Country (STC) agreement—signed between outgoing President Jimmy Morales and President Donald Trump—was fully implemented.

The agreement, signed under the threat of economic sanctions last month, promises to transform Guatemala into an STC for Honduran and Salvadoran asylum seekers while waiting for their cases to be reviewed in the U.S.

Claver-Carone claims in the August 16 communique that, "for Guatemala, offering asylum to these sister countries would not mean any cost. The United States is committed to helping Guatemala bilaterally and via international organizations to cover the costs of this process and to build the necessary capacity."

The initiative has been widely criticized by human rights advocates and legal experts in Guatemala and abroad who acknowledge that many crimes committed by the Guatemalan government during the nation's long, brutal civil war (1960 to 1996) remain unpunished.

Critics of the Morales-Trump agreement also argue that Guatemala does not have economic resources, which suffers from high levels of poverty and violence. Ironically, the majority of Central Americans seeking asylum and refuge in the U.S. come from Guatemala. All of these factors make the nation highly unsuitable to receive asylum applicants that the U.S. does not want in its territory.

As the two nations are "democratic countries," Guatemala should have less migrants applying for asylum, the U.S. official wrote. The U.S. has pledged to triple the number of H-2A temporary work visas offered to Guatemalans and finance developing economic projects there, among other unspecified "bonuses," says Claver-Carone.

"This historic agreement would only benefit Guatemalans. Let's not miss this opportunity. Let's help each other," said the Trump aid. Giammattei has half-heartedly responded to the accord signed last month, saying: "We believe that this has to go through Congress."

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