



## Guatemala

### Discontent with Giammattei administration will continue to fuel polarisation, civil unrest

 SECURITY CIVIL UNREST POLITICAL

COVID-19

The Committee for Rural Development (CODECA) on 15 February announced a protest march in the capital Guatemala City (Guatemala department) on 18 February.

CODECA is calling for the resignation of President Alejandro Giammattei for his "ineffectiveness" in addressing the country's most urgent needs during the pandemic.

Anti-government activism and scrutiny over the perceived poor performance of Giammattei in office will remain a key feature of the political environment throughout 2021.

Demonstrations will routinely be condemned by the organised private sector, as their main impact on operations will be traffic disruptions on main highways and key areas of urban centres.

#### Protest

CODECA, one of the country's key indigenous and environmental groups, called for a protest march that will depart from the four entry points to Guatemala City towards the Plaza de la Constitución in the city centre. The demonstration is likely to attract a significant number of protesters, particularly as CODECA is comprised of activists from all over the country. The protest will remain peaceful; however, significant traffic disruptions along key arteries such as the Roosevelt avenue are likely.

Besides calling for Giammattei's departure from office, CODECA is demanding the resignation of Attorney General María Consuelo Porras due to the weak efforts of the Attorney General's Office (MP) to prosecute and investigate corruption cases since she took office in May 2018. CODECA is also calling for increased government efforts to put an end to human rights violations and the persecution of community activists, as well as renewed efforts to address gender-related violence. The issue of gender-related violence has grown in importance in the political agenda over the past month, as several high-profile incidents have been made public. A bill to nationalise the energy sector, a perennial demand of CODECA, will also be presented at Congress – however, its approval remains highly unlikely. The government is unlikely to put forward renewed security (to address gender-related violence or the persecution of community activists), or anti-corruption efforts in the foreseeable future.

#### Apathy

CODECA's calls underscore the widespread opposition and discontent with the Giammattei administration, including among grassroots organisations. Since Giammattei took office in January 2020, his relationship with the media, civil society, as well as the middle strata of Guatemalan society has deteriorated significantly. However, there is no indication that the president will take a more conciliatory approach to reduce polarisation and social discontent over the next few months.

Apathy towards the administration is centred on the lack of comprehensive efforts to address corruption, the prevalence of a polarising discourse among key political players and Giammattei's inability to successfully tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. While mobility restrictions were largely eased by late January, contagion numbers remain high and there is no indication of when vaccinations will start. Giammattei's inability to deliver on the healthcare front will continue to draw criticism and opposition to his administration in 2021.

#### Outlook

CODECA frequently resorts to demonstrations to voice its political and social demands. These are routinely condemned by the Co-ordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF), as demonstrations frequently result in severe traffic disruptions along the country's main arteries which negatively impact supply chains and business operations. As Giammattei remains unlikely to effectively address deep-seated social tensions, or the COVID-19 situation, bouts of civil unrest will continue to be registered frequently, above all in main urban centres such as Guatemala City. Politicians will remain the key target of unrest.

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