

Dall'Anese: "CICIG should not become a legal parenthesis"

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Francisco Dall'Anese, head of CICIG, spoke to Agencia Guatemalteca de Noticias regarding the Commission's transition process in Guatemala. Photo: AGN/Archive.

The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) will remain in the country until 2015 and Francisco Dall'Anese hopes that by that date, the organization will not have become just another part of the judicial history of Guatemala.

In an interview given to **Agencia Guatemalteca de Noticias**, Dall'Anese affirmed that national security and justice institutions have the capacities to fight impunity; however, he believes police information handling must improve.

How does CICIG implement capacity transfer?

Mainly by supporting the new General Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DIGICRI) in moving towards a broader investigation platform that will make it possible to cut investigation times. Our work is to help strengthen Guatemalan institutions and we are now in a position to consolidate capacity transfer for officials.

Do the institutions have the capacity to undergo such a transition?

Of course. I firmly believe that with good political intent and a commitment to work, Guatemalans are going to overcome present difficulties. There is no difference between Guatemala and other countries in terms of capacities and aptitudes.

How much has the country been strengthened by the Commission's time in the country?

I believe results are beginning to be seen. There are cases where the only actors are the Attorney General and the Minister of the Interior; we have reduced our involvement to specific cases. I think the country is enjoying good progress, because the investigation body is functioning independently and, even though statistics do not paint a pretty picture, there has been a 30 per cent reduction in impunity in Guatemala.

In what areas could that percentage previously be felt?

In the complaints to convictions ratio. Also, the murder rate is going down each year: 6 years ago, there were 40 violent deaths per 100,000 inhabitants; now, there are 32. We are not in an ideal situation when compared to Canada or European countries, but I believe violent death rates can continue to fall.

In which institutions have parallel groups been identified?

It is difficult to say—we do not have the necessary tools. These groups are organizations that constantly change and when they are uncovered, they split up and then remerge. Therefore, only by conducting a daily analysis of police investigations would it be possible to map the day-to-day movements of these networks, something we want to implement in Guatemala before we leave.

In how many cases does CICIG participate?

Approximately 52 cases; however, we are not a complementary prosecutor in all of those cases. We intend to continue to reduce the number of cases in preparation for the closure of the Commission. We do not want CICIG to become a parenthesis in the judicial history of Guatemala, because we are here to bring about change, especially by reducing the reaction time to tackle crimes and determining the existence of criminal networks.

What processes should be implemented to cut reaction times?

A police investigation platform is necessary, because at present it can take weeks to generate the profile of a suspect. The registries for property, people, licenses, the IGSS, and many other institutions should be involved—public information should be concentrated in a single database. Such tools are basic and are implemented in Spain to fight crime group ETA and in Colombia to tackle drug trafficking.

What have been the main obstacles to your work in Guatemala?

It has been very dynamic, but some cases have been highly frustrating. The attitudes of some judges benefit influential groups, as documented in the Impunity Judges report. To solve these problems, we suggested that judges were given lifelong, irremovable tenures and that a strong disciplinary system were introduced.

In other words, the biggest problems concern the justice system?

I believe so, but I must clarify that the majority of judges in Guatemala are honest and risk their lives for the country each day. They have terrible security provisions and their salaries are unacceptable. More security would allow judges to enforce the law regardless of social or political factors.