

Guatemala: Political parties

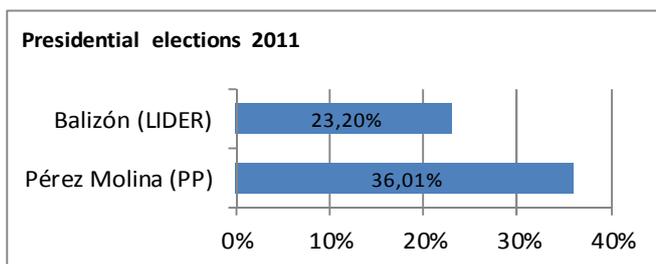
Guatemala's next presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for September 2015. The current President, Otto Pérez Molina, cannot run for a second term, according to Guatemala's Constitution. At this juncture, the political situation remains quite unstable. Two big issues are likely to dominate: young people and how to keep up the fight against corruption and organised crime.

Electoral and political system

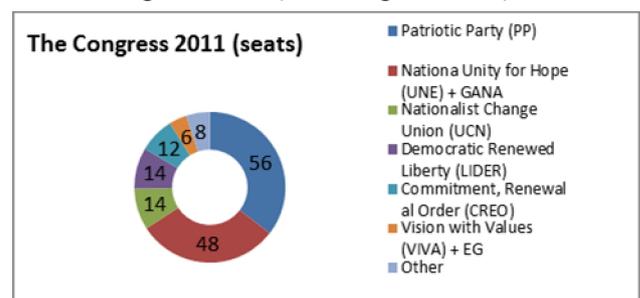
Guatemala is a constitutional democratic republic with a multi-party system and division of powers. Its [Constitution](#) was adopted in May 1985, and amended in [1993](#). The executive is vested in a President elected for a single four-year term. Following the signature in December 1996 of the [peace agreements](#) marking the end of the civil war, Guatemala's political system was gradually consolidated, leading to a substantial improvement in the political environment. Nonetheless, fears of possible crises and democratic reversals have persisted. Since January 2012, the President has been [Otto Pérez Molina](#) from the Patriotic Party (PP), winner of the 2011 elections. The Constitution forbids the President's [family](#) members from running for the presidency. Legislative power is held by a unicameral [Congress](#), the [Congress of the Republic](#), with [158](#) Members directly elected by popular vote for a four-year term. Its current President is [Luis Armando Rabbé Tejada](#) (PP). There are 21 women in Congress, or [13.29%](#) of Members. The role of women in Guatemalan politics is remarkable as they are considered a driving political force in Guatemalan society, thanks in particular to the action of international organisations. [Rigoberta Menchú](#), the Indian activist and Nobel Prize-winner, is the best known. She founded the [Winag](#) party in 2007, championing indigenous people's interests. The last legislative elections were held on 11 September 2011, coinciding with presidential elections, while the next presidential and legislative polls are due to be held on 6 September 2015.

Current political parties and coalitions

The political scene changes frequently, through the creation and demise of political parties. The many parties are, in general, unstable and leader-focused, with family members also involved in political careers. No party has won elections more than once and, in every election, new players appear. In recent elections, the winners were always centre or centre-right parties. Due to tough existing political fights and short-lived political agreements with other forces, instability is the norm for the Guatemalan [political scene](#). The most recent presidential and legislative elections, in 2011, had the following outcome (including alliances):



Source: [Supreme Electoral Court](#)



Source: IPU [Parline](#).

- **The Patriotic Party (PP)** (Leader: [Otto Pérez Molina](#)): founded in 2001. It is a centre-right political party based on liberal conservatism. Its programme focused mainly on security issues and vowed a 'Firm Hand' approach against Mexican drug cartels operating in Guatemala. Pérez Molina is a retired general, and among those present at the signature of the 1996 peace agreements. In 2011, he won the presidential and legislative elections. Its presidential candidate for the 2015 elections was [Alejandro Sinibaldi](#), but he had to resign due to a corruption case, the new candidate is [David García Velázquez](#).

- **The National Unity for Hope (UNE)** (Leader: [Sandra Torres](#)): established in 2002 by [Álvaro Colom](#) who, in 2007, became President. It is a progressive party defending social democracy and social Christian values, notably liberty, equality, human rights and social justice. Over time, it gained political impetus thanks to gradual territorial consolidation. Colom's former wife, Sandra Torres, took over the party leadership.
- **The Nationalist Change Union (UCN)** (Leader: [Mario Estrada](#)): founded in 2006. It is a right wing party.
- **The Grand National Alliance (GANA)** (Leader: [Roberto Díaz-Durán](#)): created in 2005, it is known for its conservatism and is on the centre-right. The [party](#) follows Christian principles and defends, inter alia, the family as central to spiritual and moral values, freedom of religion and Central American integration. The party forged an electoral alliance with UNE to counter losses in recent elections, and supported Sandra Torres as presidential candidate in 2011.
- **The Renewed Democratic Liberty (LIDER)** (Leader: [Manuel Baldizón](#)): founded in 2010 is a centre-right party with democratic humanist ideology. In its [programme](#) it pledges, inter alia, to defend the human being as a central element, combat poverty and social inequality while building a safer Guatemala against drug trafficking, violence and organised crime. Baldizón came second in the 2011 presidential elections.
- **The Commitment, Renewal and Order Party (CREO)** (Leader: [Roberto González Díaz-Durán](#)): founded in 2010, is a centre-right party set up by dissidents from GANA. It champions social conservatism, the free market economy and family values. One of its main aims is the promotion of Guatemala's development. During the 2011 elections, the party leader was [Eduardo Suger](#).
- **The Vision with Values (VIVA)** (Leader: [Harold Caballeros](#)): established in 2007, is on the centre-right of the political landscape. Its [proposals](#) follow participative republicanism and social economy market principles. It underlines the importance of civic and progressive values while pledging, inter alia, equal opportunities and employment. It has representation in all the country's constituencies. In the 2015 elections, the candidate will be [Zury Ríos](#), daughter of Efraín Ríos, former dictator.
- **The Encounter for Guatemala (EG)** (Leader: [Nineth Montenegro](#)): also founded in 2007, a centre-left political party. Its programme defends ethnic interests of indigenous people and social democracy. In the 2011 elections, various coalitions were made, the more important being the political coalition between GANA and UNE, and that between Vision with Values (VIVA) and Encounter for Guatemala (EG).

The 2015 elections: climate and candidates

The political situation remains quite unstable in the run-up to the [elections](#) on 6 September. The [campaigns](#) have been marred by the use of strong language, violence, 'unfair play' and spreading of [rumours](#), which discourages participation. Two big issues will be on the agenda: [young people](#) and how to continue the fight against organised crime, which is entrenched in the country system and thwarts poorer people from progressing economically while scaring off investment. Furthermore, various [sets of issues](#) need to be considered: i) the pressing problem of crime and violence ii) the high poverty and inequality levels iii) the ability of the state to exercise authority when challenged by organised crime, compounded by the serious penetration of drug trafficking, and iv) the uncertain path to global economic integration. At the moment, the [candidates](#) for the presidential elections leading the [polls](#) are: [Manuel Baldizón](#) (LIDER) and [Sandra Torres](#) (UNE). Sinibaldi (PP) running in second place had to resign due to a corruption case. Other candidates are, inter alia, Mario Estrada (UCN), [Roberto González Díaz-Durán](#) (CREO), [Zury Ríos](#) (VIVA), [José Ángel López](#) (EG), [Roberto Morales](#) (PAN) and Aníbal García (MNR). Predictions suggest that none of the candidates has the 50% needed to avoid a second round.

The EU and Guatemala

Relations between the EU and the countries of Central America started in 1984 with the San José Dialogue. In 2003 and 2013 respectively, the [Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement](#) and the EU-Central America Association Agreement were signed. The trade chapter of the second is the only part in force, with it still to be ratified by EU Member States. Currently, relations are governed by the [Multiannual indicative programme for 2014-20](#) which has as priorities: food and nutritional security, conflict resolution, peace, security and competitiveness. The indicative allocation for Guatemala for this period is €186.8 million.

The most recent [resolution](#) adopted by the European Parliament dates from 26 February 2014 and refers to the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Guatemala among other Central American countries. The Parliament gave its consent to the conclusion of the Agreement. In addition, the last EP delegation visit to Guatemala took place on 17-18 February 2015.