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Dear Mr Arzú,

On 17 January, the Guatemalan Congress approved the first reading of Bill 5377 to reform the National Reconciliation Law. This bill has progressed despite being rejected by the Congress' own Human Rights Commission. It aims to extend an amnesty to those accused of serious international crimes against humanity, such as genocide, torture and enforced disappearances, that took place during the country's internal armed conflict. If passed, the bill would lead to the suspension of ongoing investigations into these crimes and the immediate release of those already convicted.

The bill represents a serious setback for the rights of thousands of victims in the country to achieve truth and justice for the atrocities they and their families experienced during the conflict. It also breaches Guatemala's international obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish grave crimes.

On several occasions, Guatemala's tribunals and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have ruled that amnesties for crimes under international law are incompatible with states' human rights obligations, and multiple international human rights bodies and organizations, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, amongst others, have consequently condemned this bill.

I urge you to respect the right to justice of victims in Guatemala by not tabling Bill 5377 for debate and to refrain from passing it into a law. The advancement of this bill would represent a severe breach of Guatemala's international human rights obligations.

Yours sincerely,