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Do you agree with the following statement? A market economy provides my country with the best chances for future stability and prosperity. (Latinobarómetro 2009)

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Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner shakes hands with supporters during a visit to a Renault factory in Córdoba. (Mariano Paiz/Reuters)

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Guatemala in solidarity with Haiti

Earthquake strengthens bond between Guatemalans and Haitians

By Heidi Pineda for [Infosurhoy.com](http://www.infosurhoy.com)—25/01/2010

(<http://www.infosurhoy.com/cocoon/saii/images/2010/01/25/photo2.jpg>)



Isabel Alvarado, right, and Sebastián Chanchavac, middle, give a donation to the representative of Caritas, which is storing goods for transport to Haiti to help in the relief effort. (Heidi Pineda for Infosurhoy.com)

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala – Guatemalans have donated canned food, water, beans, rice, medicine, diapers, instant soup and toilet paper, among other items to centers across the city that are collecting goods to send to Haiti for the relief effort.

The donations will be sent via the country's National Coordinator for the Reduction of Disasters (CONRED), according to spokesman David de León, who added the nation already has shipped 50,000 tons of aid to the Caribbean country.

"Fifty-one search and rescue experts from the humanitarian and rescue unit of the army of Guatemala traveled to Haiti," de León said, adding the Guatemalan air force has provided planes to transport donations and volunteers to Haiti.

The Catholic Church, through Cardinal Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, the metropolitan archbishop, called on all parishes to collect non-perishable food and medication to increase the country's contribution to those whose lives were shattered by the earthquake.

"Various Catholic and secular mass media are supporting the initiative," said Dr. Sergio Carrera, director of Caritas, a center that stores donations and is connected to the Archdiocese of Sacatepéquez. "When people hear what is being said in the media, they make their donations... to assist our Haitian brothers."

Guatemalans can feel for Haitians, as Guatemala was rocked by a 7.5-magnitude earthquake that killed more than 23,000 on Feb. 4, 1976, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

"I brought everything I could to help the people of Haiti because I remembered what I had lived through in the earthquake of 1976," said Isabel Alvarado, as she made a donation at Caritas. "Many foreign people came to Guatemala to help us and now it is up to us."

"There was much fraternity in Guatemala in 1976: Everyone helped each other to move forward," said Sebastián Chanchavac. "We united to recover the bodies and also to rebuild our houses. Now, our brothers in Haiti are called to unite and support each other. Also, my Guatemalan compatriots are called to work with the Haitians when they need [help] the most."

At La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala, Miguel Ángel Ibarra, the vice minister of foreign affairs, met the three Guatemalans who survived the Haiti earthquake. However, Ibarra reported the 17 other Guatemalans who were known to be in Haiti at the time of the natural disaster have yet to be located.

Andrea Furlán, spokesman of the ministry of external relations, reported the Guatemalan government granted humanitarian asylum to 13 Haitian citizens.

Meantime, the tragedy caused volunteer doctors, nurses and firemen to form the voluntary medical brigade of Guatemala, according to Carlos Ignacio García-Jiménez, who founded the organization.

Local musicians held a concert on Jan. 22-23, during which food and medicine were collected, said Geovanni Santos, the event's organizer. The University of San Carlos also has set up stations across campus to collect donations.

Article Comments

1. Congratulations, very good article, it is about time we come together to rebuild Haiti and what better than the Communicators to carry the news to everyone so that between us all and with God's Help we will be able to move that Country forward.

Carlos 2010-01-25 23:05:00

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