

Roberto Arzú García-Granados

Businessman · Political leader · Voice for accountable government in Guatemala



Executive profile (150 words)

Roberto Arzú García-Granados is a Guatemalan businessman, sports executive and political leader who has spent his public life arguing that his country deserves a state that answers to its citizens rather than to entrenched elites. Raised in a family at the center of Guatemalan public life, he built a career in business and in professional football administration before entering politics, running for Mayor of Guatemala City and later for the presidency of the Republic. In 2023 his presidential candidacy was blocked, a decision he and many observers regard as a political veto rather than a legal one. He campaigns against the network of interests known in Guatemala as the Pact of the Corrupt, supports a zero-tolerance security policy against transnational gangs, and works in Washington to deepen the partnership between Guatemala, the United States and Israel. His argument is consistent: freedom is never guaranteed, and it must be defended together.

Full biography (500 words)

Roberto Arzú García-Granados is a Guatemalan businessman, sports executive and political leader whose career has been defined by a single argument: Guatemala will not prosper until the state stops serving a closed circle of political and economic interests and starts serving its citizens. He is one of the most recognizable independent voices in Guatemalan public life, and one of the most persistent critics of the network of officials, judges and businessmen known at home as the Pact of the Corrupt.

He comes from a family woven into the history of the country. His father, Álvaro Arzú, served as Mayor of Guatemala City and as President of the Republic, signing the 1996 Peace Accords that ended thirty-six years of internal armed conflict. On his mother's side, his great-grandfather Jorge García Granados represented Guatemala on the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine in 1947, defended the recommendation that opened the path to the creation of the State of Israel, and later became Guatemala's first ambassador in Jerusalem. That inheritance shaped his conviction that small nations earn their place in the world through clarity of principle rather than size.

Before politics he built his reputation in the private sector and in the administration of professional football, where he became known for turning around struggling institutions and demanding measurable results. He carried that management temperament into public life, speaking the language of budgets and accountability rather than the language of party negotiation.

He ran for Mayor of Guatemala City and then for President, campaigning on security, the dismantling of monopolies and privileges, and a frontal fight against corruption. In 2023 his presidential candidacy was blocked. He has consistently described the decision as a political veto engineered to protect a system, arguing that the interests which captured the courts and public contracting feared an administration that would open the books.

On security he has been unambiguous. He supports the firm, zero-tolerance approach President Nayib Bukele applied to MS-13 and Barrio 18 in El Salvador, and he proposes going further with military-administered prisons in which convicted gang members work to pay for their own upkeep. He treats transnational gangs and drug trafficking as a hemispheric problem, arguing that Guatemala's stability is inseparable from the security of the United States and of the region.

Much of his recent work has been carried out in Washington, where he argues that Guatemala and the United States want the same things: secure borders, less irregular migration, the defeat of organized crime, open markets and genuine democracy. He frames the relationship as a brotherhood between two republics rather than a transaction between a donor and a client, and he has been equally outspoken in defending Guatemala's historic friendship with Israel.

He remains a private citizen with a public argument, speaking to audiences in Guatemala and the United States, giving interviews, publishing commentary and pressing for electoral rules that let voters, not committees, decide who may run. His message does not change between a Guatemalan town hall and a policy audience in Washington: freedom is never guaranteed, democracy is lost quietly before it is lost loudly, and the countries of the Americas that value liberty have every reason to defend it together, as brothers rather than as strangers who happen to share a hemisphere and a border.

Political positions

Security and the fight against gangs

Transnational gangs are a hemispheric threat, not a neighborhood problem. Guatemala must confront MS-13, Barrio 18 and drug trafficking structures with the same resolve El Salvador applied.

- Zero tolerance for gang structures, with full due process for those accused.
- Military-administered prisons in which convicted members work to pay for their own upkeep.
- Regional intelligence sharing with the United States, El Salvador and neighboring states.
- Professional, better-paid police forces with internal affairs that actually investigate.

Breaking the Pact of the Corrupt

A network of officials, judges and businessmen has captured the Guatemalan state. Dismantling it is the precondition for every other reform.

- Open, digital public procurement with every contract published in real time.
- Independent prosecution shielded from political appointment deals.
- Asset declarations and lifestyle audits for senior officials and judges.
- An end to monopolies protected by regulation rather than earned by competition.

Democracy and the right to run

When committees decide who may appear on the ballot, citizens no longer choose their government. Guatemala's electoral rules must be returned to the voters.

- Candidacies decided by clear law, not by discretionary vetoes.
- Transparent, auditable elections with credible international observation.
- Judicial appointments removed from party horse-trading.

Economy, jobs and free markets

Guatemala does not lack talent or capital. It lacks a level field. Growth comes from competition, infrastructure and legal certainty.

- Simplified business registration and predictable tax enforcement.
- Infrastructure — ports, roads, energy — bid competitively and delivered on schedule.
- Support for small producers and exporters instead of protection for incumbents.

Migration and the border

Guatemalans leave because the state fails them. The durable answer to irregular migration is opportunity and security at home.

- Cooperation with the United States on border security and against smuggling networks.
- Investment and jobs in the departments that send the most migrants.
- Dignified treatment and reintegration support for returnees.

Guatemala, the United States and Israel

Guatemala's oldest friendships are built on principle. Roberto Arzú defends the partnership with the United States and the historic bond with Israel that his own family helped create.

- A strategic partnership with Washington based on shared interests, not dependence.
- Continued cooperation with Israel on security, technology, water and agriculture.
- A clear stand with democracies against authoritarian expansion in the hemisphere.

Photographs

High-resolution photographs are available at robertoarzuprofile.com/media. Images may be reproduced by media with credit to the Arzú García-Granados family archive.

Press contact

Press email: press@robertoarzuprofile.com

General: info@robertoarzuprofile.com

Based in: Guatemala City, Guatemala · Washington, D.C., United States

Interviews available in English and Spanish

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