



PR#246-25

PRESS RELEASE

Guatemala's Application for Permission to Intervene in the Case Concerning Sovereignty Over the Sapodilla Cayes (Belize v. Honduras)

Belmopan, November 26, 2025.

Public hearings were held by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Peace Palace in The Hague from 24 to 26 November 2025, on Guatemala's application for permission to intervene in the case concerning *Sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes (Belize v. Honduras)*.

Guatemala's oral submissions advanced the view that it should be permitted to intervene in the *Belize v. Honduras* case to inform the Court about its interest in and to protect its alleged legal rights in this case. Honduras objected to Guatemala's intervention on the basis that the Statute and Rules of the Court do not confer on Guatemala a right to intervene and that to allow it to intervene would amount to an abuse of process and introduce a new dispute in this case. It argues that Guatemala has had and still has ample opportunity in the *Guatemala v. Belize* case, to advance and protect any alleged rights it claims to have over the Sapodilla Cayes.

Belize on the other hand, submitted that the administration of justice requires that the two cases, i.e. the *Guatemala v. Belize* case and the *Belize v. Honduras* case, be coordinated, heard and brought to full conclusion as early as possible. It emphasized that while it is in the Court's discretion to decide whether or not to permit Guatemala to intervene as a non-party in the *Belize v. Honduras* case, foremost in its consideration must be the fact that the rules do not confer an automatic right to intervene for non-parties who express an interest and that the administration of justice, including timely completion of cases, is of paramount importance.

Having heard the views of the Parties, the Court will deliberate and in due course make public its decision on Guatemala's application.

It is recalled that Belize instituted proceedings against Honduras on 16 November 2022 regarding a dispute concerning sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes, a group of islands long peacefully administered by Belize found in the south of the country in the Gulf of Honduras. Guatemala applied for permission to intervene in this case on 1 December 2023. Parallel to this

case, Belize and Guatemala are involved in a separate case that was submitted to the ICJ on the basis of a “*Special Agreement...to submit Guatemala’s territorial, insular and maritime claim to the International Court of Justice*” of which the Court has been seised since 7 June 2019.

Belize was represented at the hearings by H.E. Assad Shoman, Agent of Belize before the ICJ, Professor Mathias Forteau, Ben Juratowitch KC, Naomi Hart and Mariana Verde, Chief Operations Officer, Office of the Agent.

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