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U.S. Elections Observation Mission in El Salvador, Members of Congress Call on Trump Administration to Pledge Neutrality in El Salvador's February 3 Presidential Elections

San Salvador – A delegation of U.S. organizations serving as international observers for El Salvador's February 3 presidential elections warns that aggression from the Trump Administration could have an effect on Salvadoran voters.

According to the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), repeated threats in recent months by the Trump Administration and Senator Marco Rubio to unilaterally cut aid to El Salvador signal a return to fear-mongering tactics that have been historically employed to support conservative factions in El Salvador.

"The United States has been intervening in El Salvador and throughout Central America for well over a century, tipping the scales in favor of their preferred presidential candidates, whether by direct military intervention or voter intimidation," said Yesenia Portillo, coordinator of CISPES' 2019 international elections observation mission. "That's why accompanying the progressive social movement throughout their electoral processes is so vital."

Ken Montenegro, Executive Vice-President of the National Lawyers' Guild, denounced Trump's and Rubio's statements during a press conference Wednesday in El Salvador, saying, "Elections should be a time of optimism and collectivity, not xenophobia, fear, or doubt."

Thirty-nine Members of Congress echoed similar concerns [in a January 30 letter to the State Department](#), calling on Secretary Pompeo to issue a public statement of neutrality in advance of Sunday's election. The letter, authored by Progressive Caucus co-chair Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), Rep. José Serrano (D-NY), and Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA), states: "With presidential campaigns in full swing, we are concerned that these or any such threats give Salvadoran voters a false impression that the future of our binational relations is in jeopardy and therefore impede upon their ability to freely elect a government of their choosing. ... The State Department's position with regard to the outcome of the 2019 presidential election should be guided solely by evaluations that the process was free and fair and in compliance with El Salvador's laws, not by the political preferences of any U.S. official." (Read full text of letter [Here](#).)

The Central American Resource Center, Los Angeles, also participating in the mission, notes the connections between U.S. policy in the region and the crisis facing refugees from the region. "Decades of heavy-handed political interference and the imposition of a neoliberal economic regime in Central America have produced violence, corruption and human rights abuses that continue to destabilize the region. This crisis continues, perhaps most visible today in the massive exodus of refugees from Honduras," said Xochilt Sanchez of CARECEN-LA. "We denounce the constant interference of the U.S. government in the region and we demand neutrality on the part of the Trump Administration."

According to CISPES, which has observed every election in El Salvador since the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords, systemic irregularities have decreased over the past ten years under El Salvador's first progressive government, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

The Congressional letter led by Representatives Grijalva, Serrano and Beyer was endorsed by the National Lawyers Guild, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), CASA, the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), the National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON), CISPES, CARECEN-Los Angeles, CARECEN-San Francisco, CARECEN-DC, U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities, and the SHARE Foundation.

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To schedule an interview with international elections observers in El Salvador, please contact Samantha Pineda, (202) 521-2510 ext. 204 or samantha@cispes.org