

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our deep concern regarding political violence, intimidation, and corruption in El Salvador. These types of attacks directly harm El Salvador's democratic republic and indirectly threaten democracies around the world. As the leading democracy, the United States must respond to such actions with a broad denouncement and swift condemnation.

Just over a year ago, in February of 2020, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele led armed soldiers and police into El Salvador's Legislative Assembly after lawmakers failed to approve a multimillion-dollar loan to implement a phase of his internal security proposal. This was a clear attempt to intimidate and harass the chamber and its representatives. Moreover, President Bukele threatened to dissolve the Assembly when his authority was called into question.

In advance of El Salvador's February 28, 2021 legislative elections, the political dialogue has devolved into themes of intolerance, violence, bribery, and corruption. Such tactics may have contributed to the January 31, 2021 attack on El Salvador's main opposition party, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. Gunmen opened fire on political activists killing two people and injuring five others. In the event's aftermath, the vitriol has continued unabated.

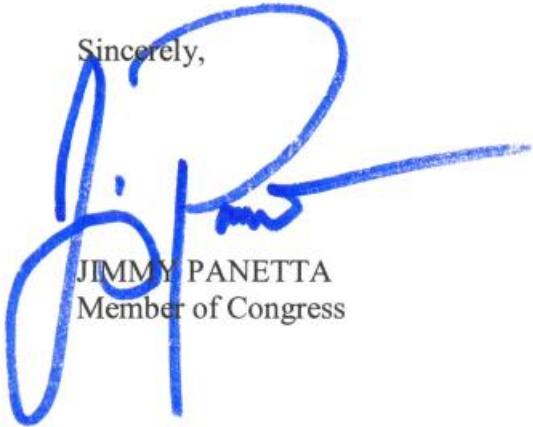
As our own nation tragically witnessed, the utilization of misinformation and violence to assert power and legitimacy poses significant danger to democracies. Misplaced disillusionment with traditional democratic norms, institutions, and processes – fueled by lies, propaganda, and conspiracy – is a troubling worldwide trend.

We believe strong, positive, bilateral relationships with our Central and South American neighbors provide critical stability in the region. We applaud your intent to work with our partners in the region on numerous policy issues, including immigration, human rights, corruption, and the rule of law. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore violent tendencies and tactics in pursuit of political gain.

President Joe Biden has a comprehensive strategy of U.S. support for regional initiatives and engagement that directly advances our democratic interests. However, it must not inadvertently bolster undemocratic or corrupt individuals or systems.

We respectfully request the administration issue a statement ahead of the February 28, 2021 elections to encourage a peaceful electoral process, denounce attacks against the democratic achievements of the Salvadoran Peace Accords, and affirm the United States' commitment to defending human rights, peace, and democracy in the region. We must continue to base our relationship with El Salvador on substantive progress towards constitutional democracy, political independence, human rights, nonviolence, and respect for the rule of law. By protecting such values in El Salvador, the United States can credibly promote the security, prosperity, and democracy of all nations in the region. We look forward to your response and working with the administration to further democratic values in El Salvador and the future of all democracies.

Sincerely,



JIMMY PANETTA  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Raul M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

David E. Price  
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Salud O. Carbajal  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

David J. Trone  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress