



National and international organizations warn of dangers of transferring human rights defender Fidel Zavala to prison, urge respect for due process and his immediate release

Washington D.C. March 4, 2025 | As human rights, religious, and international solidarity organizations, we strongly condemn the arbitrary detention of Fidel Zavala, spokesperson for the Human and Community Rights Defense Unit (UNIDEHC) of El Salvador.

Zavala, who was detained for [thirteen months before being found innocent](#) in March 2023, was witness to a series of abuses, torture, and acts of corruption committed in the Salvadoran penitentiary system during the State of Exception, and publicly denounced the director of prisons, [Osiris Luna](#), and prison guards for such acts. We are concerned about the high likelihood that Fidel Zavala's detention is also a retaliatory measure after he denounced the arrests of community leaders in the La Floresta community on February 9 of this year.

In light of this situation, we call on the security and justice agencies of the Salvadoran government to respect the rights to life and his personal safety, in accordance with their international human rights commitments. Mr. Zavala is in grave danger inside the prisons due to possible retaliation for the complaints filed by Zavala.

We also call for an impartial investigation, respect for due process and the immediate release of Fidel Zavala.

We call on international human rights organizations and international civil society organizations to condemn the arbitrary detention of Fidel Zavala and the attacks against human rights defenders in El Salvador, which seek to intimidate those who defend their lawful rights.

Signing organizations:

American Association of Jurists, AAJ

Chicago Religious Leadership Network, CRLN

Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, CISPES, El Salvador

Human Rights Institute of the UCA, IDHUCA, El Salvador

Latin American Working Group, LAWG

Nación Salvadoreña en el Exterior, NSE

National Lawyers Guild-Mesoamerica Working Group, NLG

Sister Cities USA-El Salvador

Washington Office on Latin American Affairs, WOLA