

Statement to the Salvadoran people and the international community

As immigrant, environmental, human rights, solidarity, faith based and diaspora organizations in the United States and internationally, we join the families of victims of arbitrary arrest in El Salvador to denounce recent reforms to the country's Specialized Law Against Organized Crime that will further prolong pretrial detention. These reforms will be applied to the nearly 90,000 people who have been arrested under the State of Exception, or so-called "war on gangs," cementing El Salvador's place as the country with the highest per capita prison population in the world.

Since March 2022, many basic constitutional protections have been suspended, facilitating mass arrests without judicial orders, and the prolonged deprivation of liberty without trial and without substantive evidence. In August 2025, before a two year extension on pre-trial detention approved in July 2023 was set to expire, the Minister of Security proposed a new raft of reforms, which were fast-tracked and approved by the Nuevas Ideas-controlled Legislative Assembly August 15, 2025. In the on-going, flagrant violation of the right to due process, the reforms include a second two-year extension - until August 2027 - of pre-trial detention of people imprisoned under the State of Exception meaning many could face more than five years of detention without even a preliminary hearing.

As before, the justification for the additional extension was to give the Attorney General additional time to prepare for mass trials, in which the 88,750 people who have been arrested will be grouped into just 600 cases to be held before masked judges. The planned mass trials will grant anonymous judges broad discretion to classify and treat anyone in the country as a member of a criminal organization. Mass trials like these, if they ever do take place, would severely violate human rights and would result in convictions of people who have not committed a crime; even the government has recognized that innocent people have been arrested, referring to them as "collateral damage."

The new reforms also introduce "open" trials giving judges and prosecutors the discretion to allow proceedings to remain active for prolonged periods of time and causing unnecessary delays; stipulate that minors be tried as adults, which violates the rights of children and adolescents, and puts them at risk for much harsher sentences; and reduce the quality of evidence that can be introduced, including allowing simple complaints, confessions and reference witnesses, in violation of international norms.

The changes to the Specialized Law against Organized Crime institutionalize a model of justice based on collective punishment, anticipatory convictions, and criminalization by association. They violate international human rights treaties to which El Salvador is a signatory as well as principles of criminal and constitutional law, including the fundamental rights to due process and the presumption of innocence. These patterns have intensified since the implementation of the State of Exception - with deadly consequences. Salvadoran human rights organizations report that at least 435 people have died in state custody, and, according to their investigations, 94% did not have any gang affiliation.

Accordingly, we express our profound solidarity with the victims and their families. We recognize the courageous work carried out by those who continue to protest in the streets and organize to demand justice for their loved ones, including the Movement of Victims of the Regime (MOVIR).

We reiterate our support for human rights defenders in El Salvador whom the Bukele government is increasingly targeting, surveilling and criminalizing for their accompaniment of victims and their families.

We join the families of victims of the State of Exception in El Salvador to:

- Demand the immediate release and guarantee the freedom of people for whom the State has not proven guilt;

- Lastly, we express our deep concern at the United States government's uncritical financial assistance to and collaboration with the Bukele government, including minimizing the human rights violations under the State of Exception in the State Department's latest human rights report. As light continues to be shed on the full depth of injustice and breadth of violations of constitutionally and internationally protected human rights in El Salvador, we call on Members of Congress to take swift and immediate action to suspend military and security assistance to the Bukele regime. We also call on Members of Congress to demand answers regarding the agreement and payments made between the Trump administration and the Bukele government resulting in the unlawful deportation of Venezuelans, Salvadorans and potentially others to CECOT in March 2025.

Organizaciones firmantes,



1. Albergue Tochan-Nuestra Casa, Mexico
2. Articulación Centroamericanista O Istmo, Central America
3. Asociacion Americana de Juristas
4. Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), Regional
5. Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo SJ" (CSMM), Ecuador
6. Coalición de Movimientos y Organizaciones Sociales de Colombia - COMOSOC, Colombia
7. Comité de Solidaridad con El Salvador en México, Mexico
8. Diálogos por la paz, Mexico
9. Ética en los Bosques, Chile

10. Iniciativas para el Desarrollo de la Mujer Oaxaqueña ac (IDEMO), Mexico
11. Tadamun Antimili, Colombia

United States

12. Alma de Izote
13. Arlington Sister City Project
14. Arlington Teosinte Sister City Project
15. Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera
16. Baltimore, MD Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter Veterans For Peace
17. BAYAN USA
18. Cambridge Sister City Committee
19. Cambridge United for Justice with Peace
20. Capybara Colectia
21. CASA
22. Center Porch Ministries
23. Centro Latino Cuscatlán
24. Centro San Bonifacio
25. Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)
26. Chicago Sister City Committee
27. Colectivo RAIS Popular
28. Comité de Solidaridad con El Salvador en Carolina del Norte
29. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)
30. Comité por la defensa de los derechos humanos y de la tierra en El Salvador
31. Comunidad sin fronteras
32. Crystal Lake Sister City Project
33. CSUN's SOAR Coalition - Students Organizing Against Repression
34. Denver Justice and Peace Committee
35. Dorothy Day Catholic Worker
36. Diaspora Pa'Lante Collective
37. Fuerza Mundial / Maria 'Lenchita' Guardado Archive Collection (Cal State LA Library)
38. Global Labor Justice
39. Grupo primero de abril
40. Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
41. Hope House of Prayer
42. Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace
43. International Migrants Alliance
44. InterReligious Task Force on Central America
45. JB Foundation
46. Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
47. Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
48. Massachusetts Peace Action
49. Midnight Books
50. Migrant Roots Media
51. Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
52. National Lawyers Guild, International Committee
53. National Lawyers Guild, Mesoamérica Subcommittee
54. Oakland Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines (OakCHRP)
55. Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace
56. PAX CHRISTI METRO NEW YORK
57. Portland Central America Solidarity Committee
58. Provincial Council /Clerics of St. Viator
59. Resistencia Comunitaria
60. San Francisco Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines
61. St Vincent de Paul Parish, Philadelphia, PA
62. Task Force on the Americas (Marin Interfaith Task Force on the Americas)
63. TECUS de CSUN

- 64. The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- 65. Unite North Metro Denver
- 66. Veterans For Peace
- 67. Veterans For Peace, Chapter 69
- 68. Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
- 69. West Burke Unitarian Universalist Society

Canada

- 70. Acción Salvadoreña en Montreal - Contra la minería
- 71. FMLN-ALCADES
- 72. Common Frontiers

Europe

- 73. Asociación Zehar-Errefuxiatuekin, Euskadi
- 74. Campana Café Mesoamericana, Germany
- 75. Comité Monseñor Óscar Romero De Valladolid, Spain
- 76. Comité Monseñor Óscar Romero De Vigo, Spain
- 77. FLÜCHTLINGSHILFE MITTELAMERIKA e. V. Germany
- 78. Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika, IGLA (Grupo de Información sobre América Latina), Austria
- 79. Oficina Ecumenica por la Paz y la Justicia, Múnich, Germany
- 80. Secretariado de C.A., Switzerland
- 81. Solidaridad con Guatemala de Austria, Austria
- 82. Stichting Michaël De Witte, Belgium

Global

- 83. Nación Salvadoreña en el Exterior