

Washington, D.C. September 2, 2022

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, who, from abroad, are committed to the Salvadoran reality, to its people and its history, address you to express our profound concern regarding the deterioration of human rights and the escalation of political persecution in El Salvador. Whether as members of human rights or solidarity organizations or as individuals, we share a decades-long commitment to the Salvadoran people and their desire to construct a democratic society with justice and equity. For this reason, we respectfully DECLARE the following:

1. That we have observed with great concern in recent years that democracy in El Salvador has been deteriorating, as the country suffers one of the most serious setbacks in social and economic development since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992 between the government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), which peacefully ended the armed conflict and improved Salvadoran society by increasing political participation, creating democratic openings, and seeking political solutions to national problems.
2. That this process of democratization has been seriously deteriorated under the presidency of Nayib Bukele, who, in 2020, occupied the Congress of the Republic with military force. In addition, after his party won a strong legislative majority in 2021, they have made many decisions that have been detrimental to democracy and to the independence of powers.
3. That, according to denunciations made in El Salvador and internationally, there is currently a proliferation of attacks and harassment of political opponents and that human rights of Salvadoran citizens are being violated through the suppression of constitutional guarantees. Social and political activists are denouncing the increase in arrests and mass detentions and imprisonment without respect for the principle of innocence or for due process - a reality in which the negative impacts have unfairly fallen on the country's most impoverished and marginalized communities. There are attacks on journalists, union leaders, well-known religious leaders and a clear lack of respect for democratic plurality.
4. That we consider unacceptable the violation of human rights that currently exists in El Salvador. No person can be deprived of their rights enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights. Therefore, we urge you to enforce those rights and to abandon any action that jeopardizes this global commitment.
5. That among the attacks on and harassment of political opponents, politically motivated arrests have resurfaced in El Salvador, resulting for the first time since the signing of the Peace Accords in the existence of political prisoners. Without the Attorney General's Office having presented any evidence against them, over a dozen members of opposition political parties have been detained for more than a year and are suffering violations of their rights, including the right to receive family visits or visits from their lawyers.

6. That these troubling arrests, which took place without evidence having been presented and in violation of due process, have now become standard practice against the entire Salvadoran population under the State of Exception, under which more than 50,000 people have been arrested without knowing how many are victims of arbitrary arrests. We are very concerned to see that that this extraordinary measure has been prolonged in clear violation of the spirit of the law, attacking the fundamental rights of the people, fundamental rights of the people, and the reports by national and international human rights organizations of massive human rights violations on a massive scale - including reports of torture and dozens of deaths within the prisons.

These facts lead us to respectfully express the following PETITIONS.

To the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice, we call on you to:

1. Act with impartiality in order to issue resolutions in accordance with the law and justice, as stated in the Constitution of the Republic.
2. Not to allow yourselves to be manipulated in your duties, but rather to strengthen the judicial system so that justice, ethics, integrity, and independence of powers prevail in the country.
3. Comply with the Bangalore principles, which establish as values: independence, impartiality, integrity, correctness, equity, competence, and diligence, in all processes that are carried out with political prisoners. Judicial independence is a prerequisite of the principle of legality and a fundamental guarantee of a fair trial. Consequently, a judge must defend and exemplify judicial independence in its individual and institutional aspects.

To the Attorney General's Office of the Republic, we call on you to:

1. Investigate with impartiality and to be independent in your decisions, to document processes in a scientific and lawful manner, in order for justice to be achieved in El Salvador.
2. Desist from the political persecution of innocent persons or political opponents, but rather to investigate and prosecute the real criminals publicly indicted in acts of corruption and misuse of public resources.
3. Give orders to release political prisoners in El Salvador against whom you have not provided evidence that demonstrates their culpability in the crimes for which you have charged them.
4. Not allow yourself to be manipulated in your duties by the current president who has imposed on you his political agenda.

To the Human Rights Ombudsman, we call on you to:

1. Fulfill your obligations under the Constitution of the Republic.
2. Play an active role in the face of these serious acts and to defend the physical safety of Salvadoran citizens
3. Not allow yourself to be manipulated in your duties by the current president.

4. Present a report to the national and international community regarding the true reality occurring in El Salvador with respect to rights and the law, principally the situation facing people detained under the State of Exception due to their social and political participation.

