

Dr. Raúl Ernesto Melara Morán
Fiscal General de la República (FGR)
Edificio Farmavida, Calle Cortéz Blanco Poniente No. 20,
Urb. Madre Selva 3 - Antiguo Cuscatlán
San Salvador, El Salvador

February 12, 2021

Dear Attorney General Melara:

We are shocked at the recent murders of three members of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) political party less than three weeks before El Salvador's local elections scheduled for February 28.

On the evening of January 31, **María Gloria Rogel de López** and **Juan de Dios Tejada** were killed when gunmen opened fire on their pickup truck in San Salvador as it was returning from a campaign rally supporting the candidacy of Rogelio Canales for mayor of the capital. Both victims were veterans of El Salvador's civil war (1979-1992). Five others who were injured after being shot are hospitalized. One was listed in critical condition.

On February 3, your office charged three people involved in the attack: Diego Alvarado (police officer in the PPI Division of Protection of Important Personalities), Roberto Coto (a private security guard in the Ministry of Health), and Hector Castaneda (a driver by profession).


Another killing happened on February 3 when two gunmen shot former FMLN Councilman **José Nelson Berríos Méndez**, age 45, sometime after 10:00pm in his home in Chirilagua municipality in San Miguel Department. He operated a store and a funeral home in San Miguel.


These attacks are occurring in a hostile atmosphere being fostered by current President Nayib Bukele; many are calling it hate speech. He posted a message on Twitter that insulted and attacked the FMLN, insinuating that the assault on January 31 was planned by the FMLN against their own people to gain public sympathy ahead of the elections. He has also made unsubstantiated accusations that officials from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal are conspiring to commit fraud against him and his Nuevas Ideas Party, which will be running candidates for the first time on February 28. Some supporters of the Nuevas Ideas Party even went so far as to lock election officials inside their headquarters last November—along with journalists—over disputed candidate qualifications.

These and similar disturbing acts on the part of the president and his party are reminiscent of the political violence of El Salvador's civil war. We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- ensure that those being held for the murders of María Gloria Rogel de López and Juan de Dios Tejada are thoroughly investigated and, if charged, are given a fair trial
- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the murder of former FMLN Councilman José Nelson Berríos Méndez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary means to ensure free and fair elections on February 28

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Sziitai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Sr. Nayib Bukele, President of El Salvador ~ via email
Milena Mayorga, Ambassador of El Salvador in Washington, DC ~ via email & US mail
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email & US mail
US State Department - El Salvador Desk ~ via email
Brendan O'Brien, Charge d'Affaires of the United States Embassy in San Salvador ~ via US mail
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: