

Sr. Presidente Nayib Bukele

Presidente de la República
Alameda Doctor Manuel Enrique Araujo No 5500
San Salvador, El Salvador

May 15, 2021

Dear President Bukele:

We are gravely concerned about the weakening of democratic institutions in El Salvador.

On May 1, during this first session of the newly-elected National Legislative Assembly, a coalition of four political parties (led by the ruling Nuevas Ideas/New Ideas party) wiped out the judiciary when it fired all five magistrates of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court without adhering to the constitutionally-established justifications for doing so. Attorney General Raul Melara was also dismissed under the argument of allegedly acting "with clear political motivations, which casts doubt on his objectivity, independence, and impartiality," according to the Legislative Assembly.

We are concerned about the hostile attitude that your government has shown the judiciary. Early this year your executive office made unsubstantiated accusations that officials from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal were conspiring to commit fraud against the Nuevas Ideas party (your political party), which ended up winning a landslide in the elections on February 28. The actions taken by the Legislative Assembly on May 1 indicate that the entire judicial branch of government is being punished for objecting to policies and statements from your office, such as presidential executive decrees issued for COVID-19 precautions. Your comments and actions are weakening the separation of powers in national government, which is troubling.

Many sacrifices have been made by the people of El Salvador to build a democratic system of government. Tens of thousands fought and died for a democratic El Salvador during the civil war; one million people had to flee as refugees to escape the massacres and other armed violence. Maintaining an independent judiciary is crucial to strengthening democracy in El Salvador.

We urge that you call on the Legislative Assembly to reverse their dismissal of the five magistrates of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court and grant them a defense hearing, as is their right under the law.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Sr. Rodolfo Delgado, Fiscal General de la República ~ via email & US mail
Carmen Milena Mayorga de Monterrosa, 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
Brendan O'Brien, Charge d'Affaires of the United States Embassy in San Salvador ~ via US mail
Marissa Rollens, US State Department - El Salvador Desk ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, 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: