

Sr. Presidente Nayib Bukele

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

May 25, 2022

Dear President Bukele:

We wrote to you last month expressing our concerns about the human and civil rights violations that have occurred since your government declared a State of Exception on March 27 (cf our letter April 13, 2002). Today we learned that the State of Exception has been extended for at least another month. According to The Washington Post and Amnesty International, five organizations in El Salvador have documented more than 300 human rights complaints since March 27. We expect that violations of the basic rights of the Salvadoran people will persist.

Recent legislative reforms are threats to freedom of association and movement. Some of the reforms approved since the beginning of the State of Exception do not comply with international standards. For example, the elimination of maximum time periods for pre-trial detention and the approval of trials without the presence of the accused are contrary to international law. The right to legal defense has also been eliminated in some cases.

Reports of arbitrary detentions are widespread. In your government's crackdown on gangs, more than 34,000 suspected gang members have been arrested since late March. Some people have been detained simply for having tattoos or for being present in areas where gang members traditionally operate. Security forces have been rough on detainees; at least five have died in custody. Particularly concerning are statements from your office regarding limiting food and fresh air for detainees.

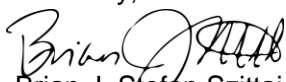
Journalists and human rights defenders are being stigmatized and harassed. A law that was hastily approved on April 5 broadly criminalizes news reporting on gang activities. Judges and defense lawyers are also experiencing increased scrutiny.

The people of El Salvador have made great sacrifices 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. Measures implemented by your government over the past three years mark a move away from democracy: militarized repression, the state surveillance of journalists and dissidents, and political persecution.

We share the concerns of Salvadoran civil society organizations that democratic institutions are being weakened. We therefore urge your government to

- immediately end the State of Exception
- reinstate the freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of the press
- protect the rights of those apprehended by law enforcement: revoke the newly-imposed 15-day administrative detention, ensure that detained suspects are not physically harmed, and that they are given a fair trial under the presumption of innocence

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: 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
 Julissa Mantilla Falcón, 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 email & US mail
 US State Department - El Salvador Desk ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

09 MAY 2022_UA41.22_El Salvador

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