

<p><b>Rodolfo Delgado</b> Fiscal General de la República de El Salvador Attorney General of El Salvador via email and US mail</p>	<p><b>José Apolonio Tobar Serrano</b> Procurador para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos Human Rights Ombudsman of El Salvador via email</p>
---	--

August 21, 2022

Dear Attorney General and Human Rights Ombudsman:

This is the third letter we have written to your government in the past four months expressing our deep concerns about the human and civil rights violations that have occurred since your government declared a State of Exception on March 27 (cf our letters April 13 and May 25, 2022). Journalists, union leaders, well-known religious leaders, and others are being targeted. The country now lacks respect for democratic plurality. Furthermore, the rights of everyday Salvadoran citizens are being violated through the suppression of constitutional guarantees.

There has been a proliferation of attacks and harassment of political opponents. Social and political leaders are denouncing the increase in arrests and mass detentions without respect for presumed innocence or due process. Without the Attorney General's Office having presented any evidence against them, more than a dozen members of opposition political parties have been detained for over a year; many have been forbidden to receive visits from their families or lawyers.


Reports of arbitrary detentions are widespread. Police have detained some 46,600 people suspected of being gang members, many the victims of visual profiling (e.g., they have tattoos). Approximately 38,000 are in pre-trial detention awaiting investigation for criminal proceedings. Human rights organizations in El Salvador have collected information on more than 3,000 cases of abuse and torture. These data include 50 cases of people who died while they were imprisoned in state detention centers.

A report released on August 10 by the University Observatory of Human Rights (OUDH) documents 63 cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. The report also records cases of arbitrary arrests, deaths of detainees in custody, and prison overcrowding. One of the most emblematic cases of torture corresponds to a 14-year-old who was detained and tortured by agents of the National Civil Police (PNC). To force the teenager into confessing that he belonged to a gang, police submerged his head in water and clamped his fingers with pliers. Although the teenager was not a gang member, he was later taken to a gang cell, where the inmates also beat him. For twelve days, the police continued to beat him. His mother found him vomiting blood when he was finally released after a hearing.

We strongly urge that you

- stop using the criminal justice system to persecute political opponents
- order the release of political prisoners against whom you have not provided evidence that demonstrates their culpability in the crimes for which they have been charged
- play an active role in the face of these serious acts to defend the physical safety of Salvadoran citizens
- present a report that accurately describes the reality of people detained under the State of Exception

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Sr. Presidente Nayib Bukele, Presidente de la República ~ via email and 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  
Katherine Duffy Dueholm, Charge d'Affaires ad interim of the United States Embassy in San Salvador ~ via email & US mail  
US State Department: Lisa Spink at the El Salvador Desk ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

08 AUG 2022 CISPES\_El Salvador

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