

**Sr. Rodolfo Antonio Delgado Montes**  
Fiscal General de la República (FGR)  
San Salvador, El Salvador

August 20, 2025

Dear Attorney General:

We are writing to express our concern for the safety of environmental and human rights defenders. Spokespersons for environmental groups have been denouncing repeated police and military harassment since May.

On May 12-13, authorities arrested **José Ángel Pérez**, a leader of the El Bosque agricultural cooperative in La Libertad Department, and **Alejandro Henríquez**, an attorney with the Water Forum and active member of REVERDES (Green Rebellion Political Movement of El Salvador). They were arrested after participating in a vigil protesting the eviction of 300 families from the agricultural cooperative. Despite an abundance of video evidence demonstrating the peaceful nature of the vigil—as well as the excessive force employed by El Salvador's civilian, military and riot police forces—on May 30 the First Peace Court of Santa Tecla ruled that the case against Pérez and Henríquez could proceed, sentencing them to six months of pre-trial detention.

Members of environmental defense organizations, along with residents of El Bosque, have since been calling for their release. In response, police are surveilling and harassing them. According to Carlos Flores, spokesperson for the Water Forum, National Civilian Police (PNC) officers and members of the Armed Forces have visited the homes of people who had been outside the Santa Tecla courthouse to show their support for Pérez and Henríquez on May 30. Police arrive in residential neighborhoods, follow them in vehicles, take photographs, and interrogate people at their workplaces. One of the questions they ask is whether the spokespersons for these organizations motivate them to protest against the government. "What's being set up is a witch hunt," said Carlos Flores as he denounced the government-led effort to dismantle civil society organizations and criminalize peaceful protest.


Now in its fourth year, the state of exception has resulted in a marked escalation of the persecution of community leaders and environmental and human rights defenders. In San Juan Opico, La Libertad Department, the 140 families of La Floresta have been working to legalize their land titles. For several months, UNIDEHC (Unity of Defense for Human and Community Rights) has been vocally supporting their struggle against forced eviction. In February, the National Civilian Police (PNC) arrested several community leaders of La Floresta, including human rights attorneys Rudy Joya and Ivania Cruz (cf our letter 16 AUG 2025) and Fidel Zavala (cf our letter 13 APR 2025).

We call on the government of El Salvador to end the systematic persecution of advocates for land rights and water protection. On July 1, Amnesty International declared that José Ángel Pérez and Alejandro Henríquez, as well as prominent human rights and anti-corruption attorney Ruth López (of the now-exiled human rights organization Cristosal, who was arrested May 18), were "prisoners of conscience."

We urge that authorities in El Salvador:

- (1) release from unjust imprisonment defenders arrested for their environmental and human rights defense work
- (2) drop all charges against the residents of El Bosque Cooperative, La Floresta and members of UNIDEHC
- (3) stop the misuse of criminal law to persecute the legitimate defense of constitutional rights
- (4) take the necessary measures to ensure that human rights defenders, community leaders, and civil society organizations can carry out their work without fear of reprisals

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Sr. Presidente Nayib Bukele, Presidente de la República ~ via email and US mail  
Licda. Raquel Cabellero de Guevara, Procuradora para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos/ Human Rights Ombudsman of El Salvador ~ via email  
Carmen Milena Mayorga de Monterrosa, Ambassador of El Salvador in Washington, DC ~ via email & US mail  
Carlos Bernal Pulido, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email & US mail  
US State Department: El Salvador Desk in Washington, DC, and Naomi Fellows, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, US Embassy in San Salvador ~ via email  
US Senators from Ohio (Husted and Moreno) and US Representatives from Ohio (Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes) ~ via email

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