

Sr. Rodolfo Antonio Delgado Montes

Fiscal General de la República (FGR)
San Salvador, El Salvador

September 16, 2025

Dear Attorney General:

As an interfaith organization, we are writing to express our support for religious leaders and institutions that, together with popular support from the people of El Salvador, are working to reinstate the historic ban on metallic mining (in place from 2017 to 2024) so that clean water would be available to all Salvadorans. In a 2012 report, an international technical committee pointed to the extreme threats to El Salvador's fragile watersheds from arsenic, cyanide and other toxic chemicals used and released in mining metals.


Salvadoran faith communities played a pivotal role in affirming the widespread public opposition to mining. In 2017, the archbishop of San Salvador led a march to the National Assembly to deliver a copy of a draft law that would prohibit metallic mining to save the country's rivers. The Salvadoran legislature passed the law unanimously a few weeks later. Popular support for the mining ban remains strong today. In December 2024, the Jesuit Central American University conducted a poll showing that three in five Salvadorans still believe the country is not suitable for metallic mining. Nonetheless, in December 2024, the Salvadoran government abruptly overturned the ban and quickly passed a new law allowing mining with no environmental or social safeguards.

In response, Catholic and Protestant churches, along with faith-based civic organizations, mobilized their opposition to the repeal of the historic mining ban. In March 2025, Mons. José Luis Escobar Alas, Archbishop of San Salvador, personally presented petitions signed by 150,000 people urging repeal of the December 2024 law. In May, the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church in El Salvador reiterated its opposition to metallic mining in a pastoral letter. Inspired by Christian teachings that recognize water and nature as a sacred gift from God, they point out that mining would exacerbate the already dire water contamination in El Salvador, further polluting the Lempa River, which supplies water to over 60 percent of the population. They remind us that access to water is a fundamental human right and a shared inheritance entrusted to all people. Church leaders have also denounced the persecution of community leaders organizing to protect their water and land from destruction.

Hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans still lack access to potable water in their homes and many more go days without water due to existing scarcity and contamination of rivers, lakes, and streams—all of which would be exacerbated by renewed mining operations. We therefore urge that your government:

- (1) reinstate the ban on metallic mining
- (2) heed the call of church leaders and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor to end the persecution and criminalization of those defending the right to clean water
- (3) drop all criminal charges against water defenders and human rights lawyers

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators


Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

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
Naomi Flores, Chargé d'Affaires-ad interim, US Embassy in San Salvador ~ via email & US mail
US State Department: El Salvador Desk ~ via email
US Senators Husted and Moreno and US Representatives 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: