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First UA: 20/25 Index: AMR 29/9100/2025 El Salvador of March 5, 2025

## EL SALVADOR FREE FIDEL ZAVALA AND OTHER HRDS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

On February 25, 2025, Salvadoran authorities arrested Fidel Zavala, a spokesperson for the Unidad De Defensa De Derechos Humanos Y Comunitarios (UNIDEHC), without justification. During the raid, they also searched UNIDEHC's office, the home of its director, lawyer Ivania Cruz, and arrested more than 20 community leaders from La Floresta. Zavala's arrest is concerning as he has spoken out against torture in prisons and witnessed these abuses firsthand.

We call on the authorities to protect the safety and well-being of Fidel Zavala and all detainees. They must receive a fair trial and full legal rights.

### Write to the President of El Salvador urging the authorities to:

- Ensure the safety and well-being of Fidel Zavala and all others arrested in the La Floresta case. They must not face inhumane detention conditions or be denied their legal right to defense.
- Not place Zavala under the custody of officials he has accused of torture and deaths in detention centers.
- End the misuse of laws to target human rights defenders, community leaders, and civil society organizations.
- Ensure that those who defend human rights can do their work without fear of threats, arrests, or violence.

### Write to:

President of the Republic, Nayib Bukele  
Email: [contacto@presidencia.gob.sv](mailto:contacto@presidencia.gob.sv) ; [prensa@gob.sv](mailto:prensa@gob.sv)  
[khuezo@presidencia.gob.sv](mailto:khuezo@presidencia.gob.sv)  
[netosanabria@presidencia.gob.sv](mailto:netosanabria@presidencia.gob.sv)  
Twitter/X: @nayibbukele  
Facebook: @PresidenciaSV  
Instagram: @nayibbukele  
*Salutation: Dear President Bukele,*

### And copy:

His Excellency Ricardo Alfonso Cisneros Rodriguez  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of El Salvador  
209 Kent Street  
Ottawa, ON K2P 1Z8  
Tel: (613) 238-2939 Fax: (613) 238-6940  
Email: [elsalvadorottawa@rree.gob.sv](mailto:elsalvadorottawa@rree.gob.sv)

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The arrest of Fidel Zavala and more than 20 community leaders from La Floresta is part of [a growing crackdown on human rights defenders in El Salvador](#). Since the government declared a state of emergency in March 2022, authorities have carried out mass arrests, used torture in detention centers, and failed to prevent hundreds of deaths in state custody. These actions reflect a broader pattern of state repression.

Fidel Zavala, a spokesperson for the Unidad de Defensa de Derechos Humanos y Comunitarios (UNIDEHC), has been a key voice in exposing abuses in the country's prisons. In 2024, [he formally accused prison authorities](#), including Director General of Prisons Osiris Luna, of torture and other human rights violations. His arrest raises serious concerns about retaliation against those who speak out.

The community of La Floresta, located in San Juan Opico, La Libertad, is also under threat. [More than 100 families face eviction](#), despite having lived there for over a decade. UNIDEHC has been helping them fight for their land rights. The recent arrests of community leaders, along with police raids on UNIDEHC's offices and the home of its director, Ivania Cruz, [suggest an effort to silence human rights defenders](#). Social organizations have condemned these actions as political persecution.

Amnesty International has warned that human rights in El Salvador are rapidly deteriorating. Since 2022, [legal reforms and a harsh security model have stripped people of basic rights](#), including fair trials and due process.

The government has also [restricted freedom of speech, assembly, and access to information](#). Those most affected include human rights defenders, activists, journalists, trade unionists, and independent judicial officials. Under the state of emergency, authorities have criminalized critical voices, particularly those defending land and labor rights, natural resources, and community well-being.

El Salvador's increasing repression threatens the essential work of human rights defenders and puts the country's democratic values at risk.

***Please take action as soon as possible until May 06, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***