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Second UA: 20/25 Index: AMR 29/9301/2025 El Salvador of April 24, 2025

**EL SALVADOR**  
**DEMAND THE PROTECTION OF FIDEL ZAVALA AND COMMUNITY LEADERS**  
**IN DETENTION**

Fidel Zavala, spokesperson for the Unidad de Defensa de Derechos Humanos y Comunitarios (UNIDHEC), has been detained since February 2025. On April 2, 2025, authorities transferred him to Mariona prison.

Fidel is now being held by the same guards he previously denounced for torture and ill-treatment of detainees, putting his life and safety at immediate risk.

His detention followed a brutal raid by authorities, which included the search of UNIDHEC's headquarters and the arrest of more than 20 community leaders.

We demand that authorities guarantee Fidel Zavala's physical and psychological safety, as well as that of all detained community leaders. They must be granted their right to a fair trial — without delay or further harm.

**Write to the President of the Republic of El Salvador urging him to:**

- Take immediate action to ensure the personal integrity and fair trial rights of Fidel Zavala and all individuals detained after the raid on UNIDHEC's headquarters.
- Make sure that their detention conditions are humane and comply with international human rights law and standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules.
- Move Zavala to another place of custody without guards he has previously denounced for torture and other ill-treatment and deaths in detention centers.

**Write to:**

President of the Republic, Nayib Bukele

Email: [contacto@presidencia.gob.sv](mailto:contacto@presidencia.gob.sv)

Twitter/X: @nayibbukele

Facebook: @PresidenciaSV

Instagram: @nayibbukele

*Salutation: Dear Mr. 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

On April 2, 2025, Fidel Zavala was transferred to Mariona prison, a facility notorious for its torture practices during the 1980s, which are being revived under the current State of Emergency. Fidel has publicly denounced guards at this very prison for torture and other ill-treatment of inmates. His relocation to this facility puts his life and personal safety at immediate risk.

Fidel Zavala, spokesperson for the Unidad de Defensa de Derechos Humanos y Comunitarios (UNIDEHC), has played a key role in exposing human rights violations in Salvadoran prisons. In 2024, he filed a formal complaint against prison authorities, including Osiris Luna, the Director General of Prisons, accusing them of torture and abuse under the state of emergency.

Since his detention, two additional charges have been brought against him, including one for alleged fraud related to a 2023 case, for which he had already been acquitted. The public prosecutor now seeks to reopen the case. Amnesty International has not been able to assess these new charges at this time.

The community of "La Floresta," located in San Juan Opico, La Libertad, faces eviction threats that could displace over a hundred families, many of whom have lived in the area for over a decade. UNIDEHC has provided legal support to the community's fight for land and territorial rights.

Currently, the detained community leaders, including Fidel Zavala, face prosecution on charges like "illicit associations" — accusations that the defense argues are unfounded. These charges stem from their efforts to legalize land tenure through proper legal channels. On March 14, 2025, the Fifth Court against Organized Crime of San Salvador ordered formal proceedings, imposing six months of provisional detention for Fidel Zavala and all 23 detainees from La Floresta.

Fidel Zavala's detention is part of a broader pattern of escalating state repression in El Salvador. Since the State of Emergency was declared in March 2022, authorities have implemented measures that include arbitrary detentions, the systematic use of torture, and the deaths of hundreds in state custody. Human rights defenders and activists face increasing risks as the government restricts freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and access to public information.

This repression endangers the work of human rights defenders and undermines the fight for a more just and inclusive society. Amnesty International has documented a disturbing trend of eroding civic space, posing a serious threat to those standing up for human rights.

***Please take action as soon as possible until June 7, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***