IRTF

Sr. Rodolfo Antonio Delgado Montes
Fiscal General de la República (FGR)
Calle Cortéz Blanco Poniente No. 20,
Edificio Farmavida, Urb. Madre Selva 3
Antiguo Cuscatlán
San Salvador, El Salvador

June 23, 2024

Dear Attorney General:

We are deeply distressed over the arrest and imprisonment of **José Atilio Montalvo**, age 72, a war veteran, an economist, signatory of the Peace Accords, and a leader of the National Alliance El Salvador in Peace.

On May 30 he was captured by police in his home in the La Cima neighborhood of San Salvador on charges of allegedly planning attacks during the inauguration of President Nayib Bukele to his second term as president, scheduled for June 1. He was taken to the El Penalito police barracks. On June 10 he was transferred from El Penalito to the Medical Surgical Hospital of the Salvadoran Social Security Institute (ISSS) for kidney dialysis. On June 14, the First Court Against Organized Crime ruled that he should be hospitalized due to his recent heart surgery care and ongoing dialysis needs. Despite that judicial order, he was imprisoned again at El Penalito.

During a two-day period before the presidential inauguration, the National Civil Police (PNC) and the Office of the Attorney General (FGR) carried out the arrests of seven other war veterans who are all also members of the National Alliance El Salvador in Peace. In the case of José Atilio Montalvo, his family states that his illness caused him to retire from political life years ago and that he is incapable of planning any crimes of which he is being accused. He has limited mobility due to his chronic health conditions.

During the armed conflict (1980-92), José Atilio Montalvo had a leadership role in the FLMN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front). After years of political activity in building a new democracy in El Salvador, he suffered a serious health setback last year (a stroke) and another in April of this year (a heart attack). After his arrest, the ISSS issued a medical certificate confirming that he suffers from stage 5 chronic kidney disease, ischemic heart disease and diabetes. The government nonetheless defied the court ruling and transferred this elderly and frail, diabetic man to prison in what is surely a political play to intimidate anyone who expresses political dissent

On June 19, the Human and Community Rights Defense Unit of El Salvador (UNIDEHC) denounced the imprisonment of José Atilio Montalvo, whom they consider a political prisoner, arrested arbitrarily and without evidence. Due to the political dimensions of the arrest of José Atilio Montalvo, we echo their concerns and urge that your government:

- release of all eight members of the National Alliance El Salvador in Peace from detention
- transfer José Atilio Montalvo to a medical facility
- end the attacks on grassroots leaders and repressive tactics intended to stifle dissent
- guarantee that all human rights defenders and political actors are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of restrictions or reprisals

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai   Christine Stonebraker-Martínez
Co-Coordinators

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
            William H Duncan, Ambassador of the US in San Salvador ~ via email & US mail
            US State Department: El Salvador Desk ~ via email
            US Senators Brown & Vance and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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