



Latin America Solidarity Coalition, 1247 E Street, SE, Washington, D.C. 20003

April 2007

To whom it may concern:

We write to express our frustration with the Department of Justice's recent actions regarding our friends at the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). The Department of Justice's effort to call into question the legality of CISPES' relationship with actors in El Salvador seems a thinly disguised effort to intimidate CISPES, whose only "crime," it would seem, is disagreeing with U.S. foreign policy goals in El Salvador.

Though not really surprised by the Department of Justice's action in this time of policing through fear, we must speak out against any effort to portray transnational relationships of friendship as criminal. We also speak out because the Justice Department's history of investigating organizations for purely political reasons, absent a legitimate criminal predicate, is well known, and has been a practice aimed at solidarity organizations before. Indeed, CISPES' was the target of politically motivated investigations throughout the 90s that found no evidence of criminal activity.

Our organizations work in solidarity with people in Latin America out of a deep commitment to principles of self-determination and popular democracy; to the idea that people everywhere deserve the opportunity to define for themselves a way of life that is fulfilling and free from intimidation.

Sadly the U.S. government is not interested in promoting such a perspective. This administration has brazenly threatened countries in Latin America with sanctions for electing the "wrong people." This administration and members of Congress have attempted to sway electoral outcomes in El Salvador (2004) and Nicaragua (2000, 2006) by threatening the suspension of remittances if the people did not vote for the choice of the U.S. government. Indeed, the right-wing ARENA party's entire history, including its founding by U.S. trained and supported death squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson, has been to service the interests of the U.S. government as well as El Salvador's tiny elite.

CISPES has the right to support alternatives put forward by the Salvadoran people. Is it U.S. policy that no alternative to ARENA is permitted?

And it is a criminal act to suggest otherwise? We believe that CISPES should be allowed to continue educating and organizing about the negative impacts of U.S.

policies like CAFTA, while challenging U.S. Congressional funding for faulty institutions like the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA.)

As solidarity organizations we speak out with the conviction that another world is possible and that the exercise of power can be aimed at affirming life, not destroying it. And we do this well within our right to question our own government's actions in Latin America.

We stand in solidarity with our friends at CISPES and in El Salvador by demanding that the Department of Justice stop its effort to intimidate CISPES, just as we demand that the State Department stop interfering in the election processes in El Salvador, as well as elsewhere in the region.

Signed:

(initial signers)

Alliance for Global Justice
INTERCONNECT
Marin Interfaith Taskforce on Latin America
Mexico Solidarity Network
Nicaragua Network
Quixote Center
Venezuela Solidarity Network
SOA Watch
Bend-Condega Friendship Project
Consumers for Peace