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Presidente de la República

Nayib Bukele

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Mr. Nayib Bukele,

**I am writing to express my deep concern about Fidel Zavala, spokesperson for the Unidad de Defensa de Derechos Humanos y Comunitarios (UNIDEHC), and his recent transfer to Mariona prison**. His detention appears to be a direct act of retaliation for his work documenting and denouncing torture and other ill-treatment, deaths, and other abuses in prisons under the national state of emergency. Zavala’s testimony has been crucial in exposing these violations, raising serious concerns that his arrest is intended to silence his work and discourage further reporting of state abuses. His recent move to Mariona prison places his life and personal integrity at imminent risk, as he is currently held by guards who he previously denounced for torture and other ill-treatment of people in detention.

As you will be aware, UNIDEHC has played a key role in exposing serious human rights violations, particularly those linked to the state of emergency. According to available information, Zavala was arrested shortly after UNIDEHC supported a complaint before the Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos regarding the detention of community leaders from La Floresta, who have been fighting against the forced eviction from their lands.

In addition to the detention of Zavala and a raid on the UNIDEHC offices, more than 20 more individuals from La Floresta have reportedly been detained, heightening concerns about increasing repression against those advocating for land rights and community organizing. An alarming series of events, as they appear to be part of a broader strategy to criminalize human rights defenders in the country.

**Given the gravity of this situation, I urge you 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.**

**Furthermore, I strongly urge you to take all necessary measures to ensure that human rights defenders, community leaders, and civil society organizations can carry out their work without fear of reprisals. This includes ending the misuse of criminal law to persecute and criminalize the defense of human rights.**

Sincerely,

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**Copie**

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