

Jailed Activist Milagro Sala Demands Freedom After 10 Months



Buenos Aires, November 8 (RHC)-- Jailed Argentinean Indigenous leader Milagro Sala has urged President Mauricio Macri to respect a recent United Nations resolution that called for her immediate release, accusing the justice system in Argentina of following the whims of certain political interests.

"We wonder why we are here if we didn't steal anything," Sala, dubbed the first "political prisoner" of Macri's administration, said in reference to other jailed social leaders in an interview with Argentina's Radio Rebelde. "What Mauricio Macri needs to start to do is comply with the U.N. resolution."

A United Nations body recently reiterated its call for immediate freedom for Sala, arguing that her arrest amounts to arbitrary detention. The U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said on October 28th that a series of "consecutive accusations" have been stacked up to indefinitely detain the Indigenous activist, while her right to adequate defense has been denied. The group made a similar call earlier this year.

Sala was detained in her home province of Jujuy on January 16th after spearheading a month-long protest against Jujuy Governor Gerardo Morales, a Macri ally. She was initially arrested on charges of "inciting mob violence" -- but authorities later pivoted, pegging her with charges of illicit association, fraud

and extortion. Sala's Tupac Amaru movement, which boasts a membership of 70,000, focuses on providing public services to tens of thousands of poor and marginalized Argentineans, such as social housing.

The Indigenous leader has accused the justice system in Argentina of playing to political interests and criminalizing social protest to protect the country's elite. In her statements, she hurled fresh criticism against Jujuy governor Morales and systematic persecution of social movements.

Meanwhile, as Sala marks nearly 10 months behind bars, her colleagues in Tupac Amaru have suffered an increase in violent attacks, which leaders see as part of a campaign of intimidation and persecution.

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