

Salvadoran Gangs Vow to Reduce Crime For Romero Beatification



San Salvador, April 24 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Leaders from El Salvador's most prominent gangs signed a pact this week pledging to reduce violence in the country as a "gift" to residents in light of the beatification of the country's famed Archbishop and human rights activist, Monsenor Oscar Romero.

The pact was mediated by Raul Mijango, who helped secure an earlier truce in 2012. Mijango, a former leader with the leftist *Farabundo Marti* National Liberation Front (FMLN) party, proposed a 26-point program to reduce violence in the Central American country.

"We reiterate that we will comply with all the points proposed to us without condition or amendments, including respect for the lives of police, the military, guardians, public workers and of course the lives of the most humble, who are affected by violence," read a statement issued by gang leaders.

The statement also commented on the social realities of the country, with leaders stating that their illicit activities stem from the lack of legitimate opportunities in the country. "Our origins lie in the poorest communities, in homes broken by emigration, violence and irresponsibility of our mothers or fathers, we are denied education, health, work, recreation and the only thing we are offered is repression, jail, and death," said the gang leaders.

The 2012 truce helped to dramatically reduce violent crimes in the country, which continues to grapple with some of the highest rates of murder in the region. The statement said that their members would also

look to avoid using violence in the case of self-defense, asking for an end to repression in exchange. Gang leaders also highly praised the work of Mijango in helping to secure peace in the country.

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