

El Salvador extends state of emergency as families protest arbitrary arrests

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San Salvador, July 22 (RHC)-- El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele has extended a nationwide state of emergency, citing the risk of criminal gangs.

This is the third time Bukele has extended emergency rule since March, when he granted authorities sweeping powers to arrest and try people without due process. Tens of thousands have since been arrested.

Amnesty International says the crackdown has led to massive human rights violations, including thousands of arbitrary detentions and violations of due process, as well as torture, ill-treatment and the deaths of at least 18 people in state custody.

On Tuesday, relatives of those swept up in the crackdown took to the streets of the capital San Salvador in protest. One mother, Maria Sebastian Amaya, said the police are arresting and jailing innocent people simply because they live in poor neighborhoods. Maria told reporters: “We know our families are not related to the gangs. If we live in those communities, it is because we don’t have anywhere else to go. We have to live there because we are poor. And the police arrive and capture whoever is there. They do not do a background check — nothing. I demand my son’s freedom.”

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