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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU of CONSULAR AFFAIRS Travel Advisors English Travel.State.Gov > Travel Advisories>El Salvador Travel Advisory Updated due to change in travel advisory level to reflect changes in crime.Country Summary: Exercise normal precautions in El Salvador. Gang activity has decreased over the last three years. This has caused a drop in violent crimes and murders. U.S. government employees working in El Salvador are allowed to travel throughout the country during daylight hours. However, due to the risks, U.S. government employees are prohibited from traveling between cities or departments at night. There are exceptions. U.S. government employees are allowed to travel at all hours between San Salvador and El Salvador's international airport, La Libertad department. U.S. government employees are prohibited from using public buses. State of Exception In March 2022, the Government of El Salvador declared a State of Exception in response to an increase in gang murders. The State of Exception allows local authorities to arrest anyone they think is involved in gang activity. It suspends several constitutional rights. This includes the normal protections of criminal procedure, like the right to a speedy or fair trial. Tens of thousands of people are currently in prison under the State of Exception. Several U.S. and other foreign citizens have been detained under the State of Exception. They remain in prison and have yet to face trial. The State of Exception is still in place. Read the country information page for additional information on travel to El Salvador. If you decide to travel to El Salvador: Always use major highways and roads. Minimize travel outside of major cities at night. El Salvador has zero tolerance for driving under the influence of alcohol. You can be detained for having any level of alcohol while driving. Do not drink and drive. Stay aware of your surroundings. When possible, travel in pairs or in groups, especially for long trips and in rural places. Avoid relying on online maps or applications. They might not accurately show local road conditions. Do not hitchhike. Ensure you have multiple forms of communication when traveling and the ability to charge your devices. Do not physically resist any robbery attempt. Stay alert when visiting banks or ATMs. Do not display signs of wealth, such as expensive watches or jewelry. Engage local guides certified by the national or local tourist authority when hiking in backcountry areas. Use caution when swimming near El Salvador's beaches. Follow water condition warnings. Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive alerts from the U.S. Embassy and make it easier to locate you in an emergency. Review the Country Security Report for El Salvador. Prepare a backup plan for emergency situations. Review the Travelers Checklist. Visit the CDC page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel and return to the United States. We highly recommend that you buy insurance before you travel. Check with your travel insurance provider about evacuation assistance, medical insurance, and trip cancellation coverage. President Nayib Bukele and his majority in the Legislative Assembly have systematically dismantled democratic checks and balances. In September, he announced he would seek re-election in 2024, despite a constitutional prohibition on immediate re-election. In March, the National Assembly declared a state of emergency and suspended basic rights in response to gang violence. Authorities committed widespread human rights violations, including mass arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, ill-treatment in detention, and due process violations. Gangs continue to exercise control over some neighborhoods and extort residents. They forcibly recruit children and sexually abuse women, girls, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. They kill, disappear, rape, or displace those who resist. Judicial Independence Since taking office in 2019, President Bukele and his allies have taken steps to effectively co-opt democratic institutions. In May 2021, Bukele's two-thirds majority in the Assembly summarily removed and replaced all five judges on the Supreme Court Constitutional Chamber and the attorney general. In June 2021, the Assembly appointed five new judges to the Supreme Court for a total of 10 out of 15 Supreme Court judges, although under the law each newly elected legislature is allowed to appoint only five judges to the court. In September 2021, lawmakers passed laws allowing the Supreme Court and the attorney general to dismiss judges and prosecutors over 60 years of age and expanding their power to transfer judges and prosecutors to new posts. The laws have been used to abusively dismiss or transfer independent judges or prosecutors. Also in September, the Supreme Court Constitutional Chamber ruled that the constitution allowed for immediate presidential re-election, although it had been consistently interpreted to forbid immediate re-election. A Bukele administration-sponsored overhaul to the constitution, which would reform the courts and other bodies, remained pending at the time of writing. Gang Violence Gangs continued to forcibly recruit children and sexually assault, kill, abduct, rape, and displace people. For decades, the response by authorities has oscillated between obscure negotiations with gangs and iron fist security policies that have led to rights violations. Violence in areas controlled by gangs drives internal displacement. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2021 reported 71,500 internally displaced people. More than 153,000 Salvadorans sought asylum in other countries, mostly the US, in 2021. El Faro, a prestigious digital news outlet, reported that, before being fired in 2021, former Attorney General Ral Melara had been investigating negotiations between the Bukele administration and the country's three largest gangs. According to El Faro, the government offered members prison privileges and employment opportunities in exchange for lowering the homicide rate. Between March 24 and 27, in El Salvador, seemingly by gangs; the highest homicide number in years, which led to authorities state of emergency declaration. According to El Faro, the wave of violence in March was triggered by the collapse of government negotiations with the MS-13 gang. Nobody had been convicted of the killings as of September. The government reported that there were no homicides during many days of 2022, but authorities have told journalists that the aggregated data on homicides is classified. The official homicide rate declined from about 36 per 100,000 in 2019 to 17 per 100,000 in 2021. In July 2019, the government changed the way killings are counted, excluding cases in which police officers were reported to have killed alleged gang members in confrontations. Abuses During the State of Emergency In March 2022, the Legislative Assembly adopted for 30 days a state of emergency that suspends some basic rights. Legislators had extended the measure nine times and it remained in place at the time of writing. Also in March, legislators approved gang-related legislation that allows authorities to imprison children as young as 12 and expands the use of pretrial detention. Over 60,000 people were detained under the state of emergency between late March and mid-December, authorities report. Many arrests appear to have been based on the appearance or social background of the detainees, and local human rights groups have documented that hundreds of people with no connection to gangs have been detained. Human rights organizations, including Cristosal and Human Rights Watch, have documented serious abuses by security forces during the state of emergency, including arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and due process violations. Cristosal reported over 2,900 cases of human rights violations during the state of emergency. Over 54,000 people arrested during the state of emergency went into pre-trial detention, contributing to prison populations increasing to an estimated 97,000 detainees, over three times official capacity. Historically poor conditions in detention overcrowding, violence, and poor access to such services as food and drinking water worsened. Over 90 detainees died in prison, according to Salvadoran authorities. In some cases, authorities have failed to conduct autopsies or else follow internationally accepted medical and legal standards. Disappearances The Attorney General's Office registered more than 28,000 complaints of missing people between January 2005 and August 2021. This is more than the estimated 8,000 to 10,000 disappeared during the 12-year civil war that ended in 1992. Between January and May 2022, Foundation Studies for the Application of Law (FESPAD), a local nongovernmental organization, counted 500 disappearances registered by the National Civil Police. Perpetrators include gangs and security forces. Accountability in these cases is rare. Transparency and Anti-Corruption At the time of his removal, in May 2021, Attorney General Melara was investigating six government officials for alleged corruption regarding funds allocated for Covid-19. In June 2021, the new Attorney General, Rodolfo Delgado, ended a cooperation agreement with the International Commission Against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES), a body backed by the Organization of American States (OAS) to fight corruption. In January 2022, the Attorney General's Office raided the offices of prosecutors who had, under Melara, been investigating allegations of corruption and officials' negotiations with gangs. Four prosecutors fled the country, fearing persecution. The Bukele administration has weakened the role of the Access to Public Information Agency including that undermine its autonomy and by dismissing one of its members. Prosecutors in 2017 charged former President Mauricio Funes (2009-2014), living in Nicaragua since 2016, with offenses involving corruption, embezzlement, and money laundering. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega granted Funes Nicaraguan citizenship in 2021. Freedom of Expression The government has created a hostile environment for the media. The Association of Journalists of El Salvador (APES) reported 421 press freedom violations between 2019 and 2021, including physical attacks, digital harassment, and restrictions on journalists' work and access to public information. APES also reported that nine journalists fled the country fearing harassment and arbitrary arrests. In January 2022, Citizen Lab and Access Now reported that Pegasus spyware had been used to hack the mobile phones of at least 35 Salvadoran journalists and civil society members, including 22 reporters from El Faro. In April, the Legislative Assembly passed an overly broad law establishing new criminal offenses carrying prison sentences of up to 15 years for journalists who reproduce messages by gangs. The Bukele administration proposed a foreign agents law, in November 2021, requiring individuals and organizations that directly or indirectly receive funding from abroad to register as foreign agents. In August 2022, the speaker of the government party, Christian Guevara, said authorities would use it, once passed, to punish El Faro. Accountability for Past Abuses Impunity for abuses committed during the country's civil war (1980-1992) remains the norm. Nobody has been sentenced for the 1981 massacre in El Mozote village, in which a US-trained battalion killed 978 civilians, including 553 children, and raped and tortured many victims. A trial of former military commanders accused in the massacre started in 2016. In 2021, Jorge Guzman, the judge in the criminal case against the alleged perpetrators of the massacre, was ousted and the trial stalled. Women and Girls Sexual and Reproductive Rights Abortion is illegal under all circumstances. Many women have been convicted, and in some cases sentenced to decades in prison, on related charges, including after miscarriages or obstetric emergencies. In June 2022, a court sentenced a woman who suffered an obstetric emergency to 50 years in prison for aggravated homicide. Between September 2021 and September 2022, courts released six women who had served 6 to 13 years in prison on charges of abortion, homicide, or aggravated homicide. El Salvador officially ratified the International Labour Organization Convention on Violence and Harassment (C190), after the Legislative Assembly ratified it in May 2022. The treaty obligates El Salvador to provide comprehensive protections to ensure a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Disability Rights El Salvador's legislative framework remains inconsistent with international disability rights law, with restrictions on legal capacity for people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities and insufficient measures to improve physical and communications access. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people remain targets of homophobic and transphobic violence by police, gangs, and the general public. In many cases, LGBT people are forced to flee the country, and often seek safety in the United States. In February 2022, the Supreme Court ordered the Legislative Assembly to create, within one year, a procedure for transgender people to change their names on identity documents. Legislators had not begun discussions as of September 2022. Meanwhile, transgender people continue to experience discrimination due to a mismatch between their gender and their identity documents, including in the ambits of health, employment, voting, and banking. Key International Actors For fiscal year 2022, the US appropriated over US\$66 million in bilateral aid to El Salvador, particularly to reduce extreme violence and strengthen state institutions. The US Congress prohibited Foreign Military Financing to El Salvador and, in 2021, the United States Agency for International Development redirected assistance away from the National Police and the Institute for Access to Public Information and towards civil society groups. In July 2022, the administration of US President Joe Biden added six Salvadorans to the 19 already on the Engel List of individuals engaged in significant corruption or acts that undermine democratic processes. They included President Bukele's legal advisor and press secretary, and the speaker of his party. In March 2022, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern about soaring violence in El Salvador and asked authorities to address it with measures in line with international human rights law and standards. In April 2022, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern over the Salvadoran government's response to gang violence, including arrests without warrants, reports of ill-treatment, and amendments to the criminal code. In June, six United Nations experts expressed serious concerns over allegations of abuses committed during the state of emergency, including enforced disappearances and a pattern of arbitrary arrests. In March 2021, El Salvador announced it was re-negotiating a US\$1.3 billion loan with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Negotiations have been stalled, apparently due to El Salvador's adoption in September 2021 of bitcoin as legal tender and concerns over the weakening of judicial independence and the reduction of transparency and accountability. The Inter-American Development Bank approved \$1.3 billion in funds for El Salvador for 2021-2024 and, in 2021, the Central American Bank of Economic Integration approved an \$8,884.7 million loan to any country in the region. (New York) Salvadoran security forces have committed widespread human rights violations since the adoption of a state of emergency approved in late March 2022, in response to a peak in gang violence. Human Rights Watch and Cristosal said in a joint report released today. The 89-page report, We Can Arrest Anyone We Want: Widespread Human Rights Violations Under El Salvador's State of Emergency documents mass arbitrary detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment against detainees, enforced disappearances, deaths in custody, and abuse-ridden prosecutions. President Nayib Bukele's swift dismantling of judicial independence since he took office in mid-2019 enabled the abuses. Salvadoran security forces have battered vulnerable communities with widespread human rights violations in the name of public safety, said Juanita Goebertus, Americas director at Human Rights Watch. To put an end to gang violence and human rights violations, El Salvador's government should replace the state of emergency with an effective and rights-respecting security policy that grants Salvadorans the safety they so dearly deserve. Since the state of emergency was adopted, police officers and soldiers have conducted hundreds of indiscriminate raids, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, arresting over 58,000 people, including more than 1,600 children. Officers have often targeted low-income communities where people have, for years, suffered insecurity and lacked economic and educational opportunities. Between March 2022 and November 2022, Human Rights Watch and Cristosal interviewed more than 1,100 people from all 14 states in El Salvador, including during a Human Rights Watch visit to the country in October. Interviewees included victims of abuse, their relatives and lawyers, witnesses, and government officials. Researchers also reviewed relevant case files, medical records and death certificates, and consulted international forensic experts from the Independent Forensic Expert Group on some cases. Human Rights Watch and Cristosal found that the police and soldiers carried out similar violations repeatedly, across the country, and over several months. Official policies and the rhetoric of high-level government authorities have in some cases created incentives for abuse, including by, at times, requiring officers to arrest a given number of people daily. President Bukele has publicly backed the security forces and tried to intimidate the country's few remaining independent judges and prosecutors who could investigate violations. He has also promoted dehumanizing rhetoric against detainees and their families, and stigmatized independent journalists and civil society groups that report on abuses. Salvadoran authorities have not reported any progress in investigating human rights violations committed during the state of emergency. The massive, indiscriminate arrests have led to the detention of hundreds of people with no apparent connections to gangs' abusive activity. In many cases, detentions appear to be based on the detainees' appearance and social background or on questionable evidence. Police and soldiers did not show people a search or arrest warrant, and rarely informed them or their families of the reasons for their arrest. In one case, police arrested a 45-year-old professor and taxi owner at his taxi shop in the state of San Salvador. Before he entered Izalco prison, officers forced him to kneel on the ground for about two hours, under the sun, and to squat 25 times while naked. Welcome to hell, prison guards said, he told researchers. As detainees walked to their cells, police officers stood on both sides and beat them, he said. The cell had capacity for 30 people but held 125. Guards told detainees they could not talk or pray and threw teargas in the cell every time someone disobeyed. He was released on bail on September 22. In some cases, officers refused to provide information about the detainees' whereabouts to their families, in what amount to enforced disappearances under international law. Judges and prosecutors repeatedly failed to provide due process protections under international law, violating detainees' human rights and making it difficult, if not impossible, for them to adequately defend themselves during criminal proceedings. Hearings were conducted in groups of up to 500 detainees, and over 51,000 people were sent to pretrial detention under recently approved Salvadoran laws that violate international human rights law. The prison population increased from 39,000 in March 2022 to an estimated 95,000 detainees as of November, over three times the official capacity. Thousands have been held incommunicado for weeks or months, or were only allowed to see their lawyer for a few minutes before their hearings. Some of the few people who were released from detention reported inhumane conditions and, in some cases, torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Ninety people have died in custody, in circumstances that have yet to be properly investigated. There are serious reasons to question the long-term effectiveness of President Bukele's security measures. Human Rights Watch and Cristosal said. Gangs have in the past benefited from mass incarceration by using prisons to recruit new members and consolidate their territorial control outside detention facilities. Failure to invest in meaningful resources in prevention and reintegration policies, as well as to address illegal economies that allow gangs to thrive, have contributed to prolonged cycles of violence. In turn, past truces between the government and gangs have often caused only a short-term reduction of killings, followed by surges in gang violence. The Bukele administration and the Legislative Assembly should adopt sustainable and rights-respecting steps to dismantle gangs and protect the population from their abuses. Human Rights Watch and Cristosal said. These include tackling the root causes of gang violence, including high levels of poverty and social exclusion, and conducting strategic criminal prosecutions focused on prosecuting higher-level gang leaders and investigating violent crimes. The administration of US President Joe Biden and the European Union should rally multilateral pressure, including from governments in Latin America, to focus attention on the situation in El Salvador, including at the United Nations Human Rights Council. Foreign governments should also step up efforts to support independent journalists and civil society groups. The international community should redouble its efforts to help ensure that Salvadorans are safe from heinous crimes by security forces, and other abuse of power, Goebertus said. More than a dozen confidential reports from El Salvador's National Civil Police obtained by InSight Crime reveal that, although weakened after a year and a half under a state of exception, the three main gangs operating in El Salvador remain a subtle threat. The Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), Barrio 18 Sureos, and Barrio 18 Revolucionarios still maintain 54 armed groups, mostly in rural areas. Nearly 43,000 people who have been profiled as gang members remain at large. These people have been classified into three categories: active members (homeboys), aspiring members (chequeos), and collaborators, a broad designation for those who allegedly work with or for these gangs, assisting in a number of tasks. These numbers call into question the triumphalist of President Nayib Bukele's administration, which has mounted an unprecedented offensive against these criminal groups. The police reports detail the situation of the gangs and their uneven presence across El Salvador. They show that the anti-gang crackdown has achieved notable success in dismantling these groups, but they also hint at the possibility that the gangs may have decided against carrying out a violent response, as opposed to being unable to do so. El Salvador has been under a state of emergency since March 27, 2022, approved and extended month after month by the Legislative Assembly at Bukele's request. The measure has led to the imprisonment of more than 72,000 people. More than 7,000 were released after it was proven they had been arbitrarily detained, but their freedom came after a few weeks or months behind bars. SEE ALSO: El Salvador Escalates Gang Crackdown With New Measures The reports obtained by InSight Crime titled State of Gangs in the Context of the State of Exception (Aprecian de pandillas ante coyuntura del Rgimen de Excpicin) are periodically prepared by the Intelligence Analysis and Production Division, a unit of the Intelligence Subdirectorate of the National Civil Police (Policia Nacional Civil PNC). They are sent to PNC Director Mauricio Arriaza Chicas, who distributes them only to highly trusted officials. The source who provided them is part of that circle. In addition, InSight Crime corroborated the authenticity of the documents with a former senior PNC official and non-governmental experts who had obtained similar reports. The analysis of the gangs' current status is centralized by the Intelligence Subdirectorate and, according to the former police official, the database is constantly updated. These confidential reports represent the Bukele administration's similar perspective on gangs in El Salvador, which is far removed from the propaganda and secrecy that surrounds official communications. Genuine internal assessments of gang dynamics have been exceedingly difficult to obtain due to the Bukele administration's clampdown on government transparency. The Salvadoran opposition, its unions, its media, its NGOs, its experts; all came out yesterday, in UNISON, accepting the total success of our war against gangs, Bukele tweeted on February 4, 2023. The most recent police report received by InSight Crime was 19 pages long and released on September 1, 2023. It states that 54 armed groups, or cliques (clicas, in gang slang), remain active in El Salvador. Back in June 2022, two months into the crackdown, the PNC monitored 97 cliques with enough weapons to be considered armed groups. This number dropped to 75 by February 2023 and to 67 by May. In September, 54 remained. The MS-13 is behind 43 of these 54 cliques; six are from the Barrio 18 Sureos, and the remaining five are from the Barrio 18 Revolucionarios. In addition, progress in dismantling these gang structures has not been consistent throughout the country. The PNC and armed forces have hit the gangs hardest in the departments of Cuscatln, Santa Ana, San Miguel, La Unin, and Usulutn. But there has been markedly less impact in San Salvador, Ahuachapn, Morazn, Cabaas, La Libertad, and La Paz. In two departments, Chalatenango and San Vicente, the number of groups has remained the same. But the most surprising case is Sonsonate, where the number of groups has increased from five to six. While the MS-13 and the Barrio 18 Sureos have been hit the hardest, 33% and 35% of their members remain at large, respectively. The Barrio 18 Revolucionarios, a gang with a strong presence in the eastern half of the San Salvador metropolitan area and in the departments of La Libertad and La Paz, seems to have resisted the offensive better, or its dismantling has not been as high a priority. Either way, 46% of its members are free. Across all gangs, the report indicates that 42,826 active gang members, aspirants, and collaborators remain free, 36% of all those registered. The highest percentage of free members are the homeboys, with 40% at large. To put it more precisely, of the 72,871 people detained between March 2022 and August 2023, only 1,230 (1.7%) have been identified as ringleaders, a category in which the PNC includes various levels of leadership such as ranflos, clique runners, and palabreros. The crackdown has also seen varying efficiency in different parts of the country. San Vicente, Cabaas, La Paz, La Libertad, and San Salvador are the departments with the most gang members who avoided capture. Although in the case of the latter two, the most urban parts of El Salvador, this could be because gang members have gone into hiding in the interior of the country or abroad. On the other hand, the government's attack has been more forceful in Cuscatln and in the four eastern departments of El Salvador. Homicides have fallen to historic lows in El Salvador and the projection is that the country will end 2023 with a rate of between 3 and 4 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2015, the homicide rate stood at 106 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2015, the homicide rate stood at 106 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. Veronica Reyna, human rights director at the Passionist Social Service (Servicio Social Pasionista SSPAS), confirmed that the gangs have lost power and territory since the state of exception began but strongly questioned the government's ruthless approach, referring to national and international reports of systematic violations of human rights in El Salvador. The government gives superficial solutions that are often rooted in illegality and human rights violations, such as extrajudicial executions and torture. But if that is how we define success, any cynical government with no limits can do it, she said. SEE ALSO: How El Salvador's Police Creates, Uses Its Gang Database Research and public security consultant, Luis Enrique Amaya, agreed that the government's so-called war on gangs had dealt them an unprecedented blow. People have a perception of better security, and that perception is not false; it is not the result of a publicity campaign by the president, Amaya told InSight Crime. However, he explained that it is a step too far to assert that gangs are a thing of the past, as the government and even some opposition parties have done. The gangs are no longer as we knew them, with the strength they had, with a public presence in large parts of the country, said Amaya. Instead, he pointed to sleeper cells of gang members, who have decided to be temporarily and intentionally inactive. This lends further credence to the hypothesis that the gangs' lack of a violent response is a deliberate strategy. Knowing the history of the gangs, one wonders if they are not simply in a process of adaptation, of redefining their way of being, their way of operating, Amaya said. In fact, while reports of extortion registered by the PNC have decreased by 54% in 2023 compared to the same period in 2022, 16 complaints related to extortion are still made every week. A total of 572 complaints had been processed as of September 11, and in 375 of these, the extortions were identified as being from the MS-13 or one of the Barrio 18 factions. Another indicator is that only 83 rifles have been seized by police so far in 2023, as compared to 242 last year. Prior to the state of exception, the numbers were much higher, with police seizing 321 rifles in 2020 and 508 in 2019. This indicates that the gangs may have hidden a large part of their arsenals, as indicated by an InSight Crime investigation in July 2022. But the government has tightly controlled its data, declaring far and wide that it has eliminated the country's gangs. This supposed success has made Bukele immensely popular, and despite a constitutionally-imposed one-term limit, he has declared his intention to run for a second term. Under President Bukele's state of exception, security forces have detained more than 72,000 people. Credit: El Salvador government. Regardless, the gang issue may linger. In the last few days, there has been information, which is being confirmed, about possible actions by the MS-13 gang to try to influence or boycott the upcoming elections, read the September 1 report. In conclusion, the PNC Intelligence Sub-Directorate believes it is still too early to say that the regime has dismantled the gangs in El Salvador. They are weakened, but there are still cliques that can carry out murders as ordered, said the report. \*With additional reporting from Steven Dudley. 6/4/2025 Shul of Bal Harbour, FL, United States of America OSAC Americas, Academia, Faith-Based, and International Development members are invited to register for the... 6/5/2025 Virtual, Washington DC, United States of America OSAC France invites OSAC Full Access members to join us for an upcoming webinar on Thursday, June 5 from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM. 6/13/2025 Spotify, Los Angeles CA, United States of America Media and Entertainment members are invited to attend an in-person meeting on Monday June 9 from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM. 6/21/2025 U.S. Embassy Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan OSAC Japan Chapter members are invited to register now for an upcoming OSAC Japan Chapter meeting at... 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To put an end to gang violence and human rights violations, El Salvador's government should replace the state of emergency with an effective and rights-respecting security policy that grants Salvadorans the safety they so dearly deserve. Since the state of emergency was adopted, police officers and soldiers have conducted hundreds of indiscriminate raids, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, arresting over 58,000 people, including more than 1,600 children. Officers have often targeted low-income communities where people have, for years, suffered insecurity and lacked economic and educational opportunities. Between March 2022 and November 2022, Human Rights Watch and Cristosal interviewed more than 1,100 people from all 14 states in El Salvador, including during a Human Rights Watch visit to the country in October. Interviewees included victims of abuse, their relatives and lawyers, witnesses, and government officials. 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