

Public statement condemning the elimination of limits on presidential reelection in El Salvador

August 2025

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) strongly condemns the constitutional reforms [approved](#) by the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador on July 31, 2025. These reforms eliminates presidential term limits on presidential reelection, extend the length of the presidential term, and modify the country's electoral calendar, constituting a direct threat to democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights, including academic freedom.

With 57 votes from the ruling Nuevas Ideas ("New Ideas") party and its allies, the Assembly [approved](#) indefinite presidential reelection, the extension of the term of office from five to six years, the elimination of the runoff election, and the advancement of presidential elections to 2027, to coincide with legislative and municipal elections. A previous amendment to Article 248 of the Constitution allowed these changes to be enacted in a single legislative session, violating the constitutional tradition of double ratification and weakening democratic oversight mechanisms.

These amendments openly favor the [concentration of power](#) in the hands of Nayib Bukele, breaking the essential principles of a constitutional democracy: separation of powers, alternation of power, and guarantees of a fair electoral process. They were adopted without public debate or citizen consultation, in a context where the ruling party exercises near total control over the legislative, judicial, and electoral branches. They are part of a systematic pattern of [institutional erosion](#) that began in 2021, which includes the unconstitutional removal of judges, an indefinite state of emergency marked by arbitrary mass arrests, the persecution of opponents, journalists, and human rights defenders, and the [weakening](#) of oversight institutions.

[Academic freedom](#) is also under threat. The University of El Salvador faces budgetary and legislative pressures that jeopardize its autonomy, with delayed state transfers and unconsulted reform proposals that undermine the public university's ability to sustain critical and free education.

Indefinite presidential reelection, as [warned](#) by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, poses a structural risk to democracy. By following the path of authoritarian regimes in the region, El Salvador sets a worrying [precedent](#) for Latin America, where prolonged concentration of power erodes pluralistic debate and transparency and fosters nepotism and corruption.

Therefore, to believe that a single person can hold the fate of a nation in their hands is not only naïve –it is profoundly dangerous. History and political philosophy teach us that great changes do not depend on an isolated individual, but on collective commitment, institutional balance, and an active citizenry. Claiming that only one person is fit to govern is to deny the equal moral and civic capacities we all share as human beings. Communities that thrive are not those that place their faith in unquestionable leadership, but those that trust their people, value diversity of thought, and work together to build a more just, equitable, and dignified future for all.

In light of this situation, LASA urgently calls on:

1. The Salvadoran authorities to restore constitutional order, respect the alternation of power, and guarantee democratic principles and fundamental rights, including academic freedom.
2. International organizations, such as the OAS and the UN, to closely monitor the situation, denounce democratic backsliding, and take diplomatic action to restore institutional order.
3. The academic community and international civil society to express solidarity with activists, journalists, victims of arbitrary detention, and members of the academic community who carry out critical work under increasing state harassment.
4. Higher education institutions and global academic networks to speak out publicly against these reforms and support efforts to safeguard university autonomy and freedom of thought in El Salvador.
5. The democratic states of the region to exert political and diplomatic pressure to prevent indefinite reelection from becoming an acceptable practice and spreading throughout Latin America.
6. International electoral observation missions and human rights organizations to establish permanent monitoring in El Salvador to guarantee free, fair, and transparent elections, as well as respect for the political rights of all citizens, without intimidation or reprisals.

LASA reiterates its commitment to the defense of democracy, human rights, freedom of thought, and university autonomy in Latin America, and expresses its solidarity with the Salvadoran people, who deserve to live in a democratic, just state that respects human dignity.

About LASA

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the world's largest professional association constituted by individuals and institutions devoted to the study of Latin America and the Caribbean. LASA currently has over 12,000 members from around the world and a committee that defends academic freedom and human rights.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or send an email to lasa@lasaweb.org.

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