

Critics in El Salvador denounce approval of law to revive metal mining



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by María Josefina Arce

In 2017, El Salvador approved a law banning metallic mining, after more than a decade of struggle by environmental groups, social movements, and other sectors of society, such as the Catholic Church, due to its negative impact on the environment and the lives of rural communities.

The approval of the law by the Legislative Assembly of the small Central American country was described at the time as historic and decisive, with 77% of the population supporting it, according to polls.

However, the current government has left this law without effect, after the current legislative body, dominated by Nuevas Ideas, the party of President Nayib Bukele, approved a law that gives a free hand to this practice in Salvadoran territory, which is rejected by a large part of the population.

The government's intentions were denounced by environmental activists, who pointed out that they would lead to a slow but sure death and the enrichment of transnational corporations.

Throughout the year, there were several protests against the government's plans, which were presented under the argument that the implementation of this activity will contribute to the country's development, while experts consider that it is synonymous with precariousness, inequality, poverty and underdevelopment.

Earlier this month, many citizens from different regions of the country gathered in front of the Legislative Assembly in the capital, San Salvador, to protest the possible repeal of the law banning mining.

Academics, environmentalists, and citizens in general affirm that extractive activities will bring complications in the food supply, as well as diseases such as cancer and kidney failure.

The main concern is water, which is already scarce in the country and which will be aggravated by mining due to the contamination of this essential resource with toxic substances such as cyanide, lead and cadmium, among others.

They also denounce that it will cause the forced migration of several communities in departments such as Chalatenango, Cabañas and Usulután.

Many voices are calling the repeal of the 2017 regulation a setback and a violation of the right of Salvadorans to a healthy environment.

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