

Trial against former FMLN officials begins in Salvadoran court

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FMLN militants and sympathizers staged protests over the weekend in rejection of what they consider a political case. | Photo: Twitter @FMLNOficial

San Salvador, July 28 (RHC)-- A San Salvador court has set up a preliminary hearing against 10 former officials, including former President Salvador Sánchez Cerén, of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), for alleged corruption offenses.

This follows the arrest last week of some of those involved in the judicial process initiated at the request of the former FMLN candidate and current Salvadoran president, Nayib Bukele.

Among the defendants is former President Sánchez Cerén (absent from the trial), on corruption charges for allegedly receiving irregular payments in the administration of Mauricio Funes (2009-2014, Sánchez Cerén was vice president during that period).

One of the prosecutors in the case said before the start of the hearings that the Prosecutor's Office has "sufficient probative evidence" and will request provisional detention for the defendants present.

Among the detainees are former Finance Minister Carlos Cáceres, former Health Minister Violeta Menjívar, former vice ministers Hugo Flores and Erlinda Handal (daughter of a historic FMLN leader, Scháfik Handal), and former FMLN deputy Calixto Mejía (2015-2018).

Those absent from the hearing are former President Sánchez Cerén, who sent a lawyer to represent him, and four other people who are outside the country, and for whom the Attorney General's Office has requested that international arrest warrants be issued.

They are José López Juárez, former president of the Executive Port Commission (CEPA) and the former private secretary of the Presidency Manuel Melgar, as well as the former ministers of Public Works and Environment, Gerson Martínez and Lina Pohl, respectively.

This case is one of the cases promoted by President Nayib Bukele, as soon as he became President, against his former political party. The FMLN has rejected this trial as a case of political persecution.

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