

Bukele distorts important facts of Salvadoran history

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Salvadoran President, Nayib Bukele.

By María Josefina Arce

The Salvadoran president, Nayib Bukele, seems determined to change history and ignore events that marked a transcendental change in the Central American country, such as the peace agreements signed in 1992 that put an end to 12 years of civil war, with a toll of some 75 thousand victims.

The thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the agreements in Mexico between the former guerrilla Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front of El Salvador and the government of Alfredo Cristiani, of the right-wing ARENA, Nationalist Republican Alliance, passed without any official commemoration.

But Bukele insists on distorting and qualifying that important moment as a farce. Even days before the date, the National Assembly, controlled by the president's New Ideas Party, approved a decree to eliminate the commemoration.

The declarations and actions of the government have provoked uneasiness in a large part of the society, which still has many open wounds and does not forget the atrocities committed before and during the conflict by the army and paramilitary groups such as the so-called death squads, which had the support of the United States.

Last December marked the 40th anniversary of a regrettable event, the massacre of El Mozote, a Salvadoran town where the army murdered 988 civilians, half of them children.

The Truth Commission, one of the mechanisms established by the accords, concluded that the vast majority of the cases it investigated were the responsibility of the state and the illegal armed groups it created.

All this and more Bukele wants to leave aside when disqualifying the pact signed in Mexico, which started a democratic process and created a new reality in the small Central American nation.

The truth is that the agreements redefined the mandate of the armed forces, limiting their actions to national defense, denying them a role in internal politics or security. They also acknowledged human rights violations, promoted the separation of powers and opened the way for the creation of a civilian-controlled police force.

Under Bukele, many believe, some pre-1992 conditions are once again present in El Salvador, which is experiencing a moment of regression, with constant attacks on democracy.

Bukele and his allies have undermined democratic mechanisms, removed or placed at their convenience representatives of the judiciary and threatened legislators and members of opposition parties, while the army continues to be used in public security operations, even though it is prohibited by the Mexico pact.

Although there are still pending issues and much to be done regarding the implementation of the peace accords, it is the opinion of many Salvadorans that the right thing to do is to continue working on this path and not to dismantle the existing mechanisms.

There is undoubtedly a breach of what was agreed 30 years ago. Bukele with his authoritarian mandate puts at risk guarantees and rights that were achieved for all Salvadorans.

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