

# *Thousands Demand Freedom for Argentinean Leader Milagro Sala*

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Buenos Aires, January 28 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Thousands of Argentines gathered in Buenos Aires' central Plaza de Mayo Wednesday to protest the criminalization of social protest and demand freedom for Milagro Sala, a dissident lawmaker and Indigenous leader jailed for speaking out against President Mauricio Macri.

The protests come as Sala has been in prison for 11 days after being arrested in Argentina's Jujuy province at the orders of Governor Gerardo Morales for criticizing the policies of Macri's government. Outraged social movements have slammed the arrest as illegitimate and have vowed to continue protesting until the prolific social leader is free.

According to teleSUR correspondent Leo Poblete Codutti in Buenos Aires, the protest was a show of rage over the increase in criminalization of social protest in Argentina in recent weeks since Macri came to power.

During the demonstration, a documentary telling the story of Sala's life and social struggles was shown in a tent set up in the middle of the protest.

Sala founded the Tupac Amaru organization based on the ideology of three important historical figures in Argentina: South American Indigenous liberator Tupac Amaru, revolutionary Che Guevara, and former

First Lady Eva Peron. The 70,000 member-strong organization works on a number of political issues and with Indigenous communities.

Prior to her arrest, Sala had been participating in a sit-in, camping outside local government offices for over a month in support of various social organizations at risk of losing their legal status and social benefits after Governor Morales threatened to suspend them via decree.

According to Carolina Gairard, Argentine lawmaker with the Front for Victory, Sala's arrest was illegitimate and illegal.

"She is the first political prisoner of Mauricio Macri," Gairard told teleSUR during the CELAC Summit in Quito, Ecuador, on Tuesday. "And we hope she will be the last."

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