

Argentinean Leader Ordered Freed But Still in Jail on New Charges



Buenos Aires, January 30 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Jailed Argentine Indigenous leader and lawmaker Milagro Sala, who many have called the first political prisoner of President Mauricio Macri's administration, is still in prison almost two weeks after being arrested, but now for a different reason.

Sala, founder and head of the 70,000 member-strong Tupac Amaru political movement, was detained on January 16 in the province of Jujuy on allegations of inciting violence and turmoil. She had been participating in a month-long protest against Jujuy Governor Gerardo Morales before her arrest.

But now Sala will remain jailed on allegations of irregular management of funds earmarked for low-income housing construction. Her ongoing detention was announced immediately after a judge declared that she was found not guilty of inciting violence and would be freed.

The provincial government of Jujuy, whose Governor Morales ordered Sala's arrest, has accused Sala of illicit association and fraud based on alleged mismanagement of public funds.

High-profile activists including Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo leader Estela de Carlotto and Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel have declared Sala a political prisoner. Opposition lawmakers have called the arrest arbitrary and illegal.

Sala is a well-known activist in Argentina and a representative in the South American trade bloc Mercosur Parliament, known as Parlasur. She has gone on hunger strike to protest her detention.

Hundreds of supporters have also rallied for Sala's cause. Over 100 protesters set up camp three days ago in Buenos Aires' Plaza de Mayo in front of the presidential palace, vowing to continue the encampment until Sala is released.

Demonstrators also gathered in the square earlier this week to protest the criminalization of social protest under the Macri administration and to demand Sala's freedom.

Sala's husband Raul Noro has told local media that his wife was detained "without any proof."

Sala's arrest has been widely interpreted as a form of political revenge against the social leader who has long been an ally of former leftist presidents Cristina Fernandez and Nestor Kirchner.

Supporters have also argued that Sala is a victim of discrimination as a poor, Indigenous woman.

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