

Lawyers Demand Freedom for Argentine Leader Milagro Sala



Buenos Aires, February 1 (RHC-teleSUR) -- The legal team of jailed Argentine Indigenous leader and lawmaker Milagro Sala made a new request for her release on Saturday, one day after she was forced to remain in prison on new charges.

Sala's lawyers requested that she be released on bail with a bond fund as a guarantee. The legal representatives assured authorities that Sala's freedom would "not disturb the investigation" being leveled against her.

The well-known Indigenous leader, founder of the 70,000 member Tupac Amaru organization, was arrested on Jan.16 in the province of Jujuy on charges of inciting violence after protesting in a month-long sit in against Governor Gerardo Morales, who ordered her arrest.

A judge cleared Sala of those charges on Friday, but before she walked out of jail she was handed a new set of accusations and ordered to stay behind bars while investigations into charges of "illicit association, fraud, and extortion" are launched at the request of the Jujuy government, local media reported.

According to the conservative Argentine newspaper La Nacion, Morales has had a tense and "estranged" relationship with Sala for years. Morales has also had an antagonistic relationship with the social organizations and collectives with which Sala is aligned. Before her arrest, Sala was protesting in support

of various organizations at risk of losing their legal status and social benefits after Morales threatened to suspend them via decree.

Meanwhile, supporters have occupied the Plaza de Mayo for the past four days to demand Sala be released from jail. Protesters in the camp, located in Buenos Aires' main square in front of the Casa Rosada presidential palace, have vowed to continue until Sala is allowed to walk free. Popular protests demanding her freedom have called her arrest 'illegal and discriminatory'.

In a handwritten letter attributed to Milagro Sala, reportedly written from jail in Jujuy on Saturday and shared by Argentine news outlet Agencia El Vigia, she wrote: "May this prison serve to find ourselves more united, more organized, more in solidarity for the happiness of the people."

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.

Many high-profile activists and opposition lawmakers have called Sala the first political prisoner of Macri's government.

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