Weekly report

October 12 to 18, 2026

English translation of the supplied Spanish report. The original document's arguments, figures, allegations and opinions are retained. Images and the original layout are available in the Spanish PDF. Figures that differ between sections are reproduced as written in the original; the translation does not reconcile them.

Weekly commentary

The government has suffered a major setback: Bukele exposed his criminal and dictatorial nature. Moreover, in trying to clarify his misstep afterward, he became even more entangled: it was apparent that he was not clarifying the substance of his excesses, only how they were communicated. The most revealing episode was his October 13 announcement of possible “early release” for around 50% of people deprived of liberty under the state of exception, followed by a correction on October 16: it would not be half of “the inmates” who would be released, but around 5,000 classified as “occasional collaborators,” and “no gang member would get out.” The sequence confirms that there was no turn toward justice, only “damage control.” The implicit acknowledgment is what matters most: Bukele admitted that there is a group of detainees who could be released, even suggesting it was around 50%, but carefully avoided calling them “innocent.” He relabeled them “collaborators,” maintaining the hard-line narrative and avoiding responsibility for the state of exception's arbitrary imprisonment of thousands of innocent people.

In this context, reviews remain in the hands of the executive branch through prison benefits such as “Cero Ocio” (Zero Idleness), rather than independent judges. This inadvertently confirms that he is a dictator, since the other branches of government, including the judiciary, are under his control.

That is why MOVIR and UNIDEHC insisted: “We do not want conditional releases; we want justice.” Added to this is the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, not a “Sarajevo Prize.” Bukele was nominated in early October by the far-right Europe of Sovereign Nations group. His correction came three days before the first key vote in Strasbourg. It is plausible that Bukele's government was trying to adjust its image before members of the European Parliament, but that hypothesis does not invalidate the initial assessment: the correction was primarily reactive, aimed at containing the media scandal and reaffirming what Bukele had said: “No gang member will get out.” If he was seeking the prize, the maneuver was late and probably insufficient, because a rhetorical correction is not a genuine commitment to human rights.

The rest of the week reinforces the pattern of opacity and contradiction: Desaparecidos SOS reported 28 bodies found in September, compared with only eight official homicides reported by the PNC, fueling allegations of undercounting. Lawyer Roxana Cardona reported a “surprising and strange” police visit to her home after her criticism of the regime. The Assembly approved the transfer of 50 public trucks to the private company Constructora El Salvador, owned by his clan, through the DOM, without an audit or financial transparency. Local school-shoe suppliers reported MINED debts that have brought them to the brink of ruin, after the ministry bypassed outstanding debts to them and imported defective shoes. In the economy, the government kept fuel prices “frozen” at up to $5.14 per gallon, while Grupo Cox's $2.9 billion investment was presented as historic but had yet to be

implemented. In foreign policy, Keiko Fujimori announced a visit to CECOT, and Marco Rubio pressured Bukele to dismantle trade relations with China and vote at the UN in favor of the blockade against Cuba.

Taken together, the week leaves a clear balance: the dictator knows how to adjust the narrative when pressure increases, but does not correct his practices. The correction concerning people deprived of liberty and its coincidence with the Sakharov Prize show an executive attentive to its international image but willing to concede only the minimum so as not to undermine its narrative of security and human rights violations. The test lies neither in the announcement nor in the nomination, but in Bukele placing verifiable actions before Salvadoran society: releasing innocent people, placing reviews in judicial hands, being accountable, compensating and repairing the harm caused to innocent detainees, and allowing transparency. So far, all of that remains pending.

Bukele acknowledges 50,000 innocent people

President Nayib Bukele announced that his government has a plan to grant early release with monitoring to around 50% of people deprived of liberty under the state of exception for collaborating with gangs. He made the statement at a press conference after announcing Grupo Cox's $2.9 billion investment, which has not begun and may be another demagogic lie or pre-election propaganda.

The plan to release innocent people: Bukele said that although many committed offenses by collaborating with gangs, this practice was not unusual in the country, making it necessary to assess, four years later, how guilty they were. He plans conditional releases with monitoring “for those who collaborated less,” representing between 45% and 55% of detainees, without explaining the basis for his calculations.

Bukele stated that the government has “a plan” for early release that includes monitoring around 50% of people detained under the state of exception for collaborating with gangs. He explained that a criterion had been established to measure each detainee's level of collaboration. Many committed offenses through collaboration, but because the practice was so common, each person's degree of guilt should be assessed. Bukele did not specify the criteria, what or who would assess the cases, the monitoring conditions, or whether legal reforms would be needed to implement it.

Ibrajim Bukele, the dictator's brother, said in April 2026 that an “independent” team was reviewing cases, made up of state employees, including staff from the first lady's office. However, Bukele clarified that his brother has no role in the plan and no position on the commission.

Finally, he defended continuing the state of exception, saying that “despite the security situation, risks remain that prevent the withdrawal of the extraordinary measures.”

Source 1: https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/bukele-sobre-regimen-tenemos-un-plan-que-beneficiaria-al-50-de-los-presos-con-una-liberacion-anticipada-20261013-0066.html

Source 2: https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/presidente-amplio-sus-declaraciones-sobre-sustitutivas-para-colaboradores-de-las-pandillas-20261016-0059.html

Why say “people deprived of liberty”?

Why call people in a prison “people deprived of liberty” rather than inmates, criminals, prisoners, or another similar label? The use of “people deprived of liberty” instead of “inmates” or “prisoners” reflects a paradigm shift in criminal law and human rights, promoted by international bodies such as the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. There are four reasons for this linguistic and legal transition:

• Human rights and dignity: personhood comes first. Human rights are inherent to all human beings. Someone who commits a crime or faces criminal proceedings does not lose their humanity or all their rights. The only legal condition that changes is the temporary loss of freedom of movement.

• Avoiding stigma and permanent labels: words such as “inmate,” “criminal,” and “prisoner” often carry a negative social stigma that reduces a person's identity to their legal situation or a past act. This language seeks to avoid permanently labeling people and to facilitate subsequent reintegration into society.

• Legal and technical precision: not everyone in prison has the same legal status. Some await judgment in pretrial detention and enjoy the presumption of innocence; others have a final conviction. “People deprived of liberty” is a broad, accurate and neutral concept for anyone in state custody in a detention facility, regardless of the stage of their proceedings.

• Consistency with the purpose of punishment: legal systems orient imprisonment toward reform and rehabilitation, not solely punishment or retribution. Using the correct term is the first step toward turning prisons into spaces of transformation rather than dehumanization.

What Bukele's statements demonstrate

Ivania Cruz of UNIDEHC commented that Bukele's recent statements about people deprived of liberty demonstrate:

• Arbitrary arrests exist, and human rights defenders' struggle is legitimate.

• There is no rule of law in El Salvador: it is not for the “president” to release anyone. This also demonstrates the lack of independence of state institutions.

• The list sent to the “human rights commissioner,” resulting from work by @UNIDEHC and @MOVIRSV, must be taken into account. Documentary evidence of innocent detainees already exists.

Source 3: https://x.com/IvaniaCruz15/status/2110387740890067052

MOVIR demands the unrestricted release of 50,000 innocent people

MOVIR demanded that Nayib Bukele release innocent people and warned: “We do not want conditional releases; we want justice.” After years of mass imprisonment, Bukele admitted that he could release around half of prisoners accused of collaborating with gangs.

For Samuel Ramírez, MOVIR spokesperson, this is no reason to celebrate: if Bukele recognizes that thousands were arbitrarily detained, he must release them definitively, review unjust convictions, and answer for abuses. Ramírez questioned the criteria for calculating the 50% of beneficiaries and demanded an explanation of how each case would be evaluated, when releases would begin, and what guarantees people would have. He argued that those who collaborated voluntarily cannot be equated with those who did so under threats in order to survive: “They were victims of the gangs, and now they are victims of the regime.”

He reported that people with favorable rulings or release orders issued by judges remain detained, calling judicial independence into question. MOVIR warned that conditional release does not restore rights: it brings difficulty working or leaving the country, and rearrests. It insisted on reviewing disputed proceedings, releasing innocent people, and investigating officials for due-process violations. It warned that the entire initiative could be an electoral maneuver or a smokescreen amid domestic and international criticism. It promised to monitor dates, criteria and results, and called for an assessment of whether the state of exception should continue.

For MOVIR, the test is in actions rather than speeches: releasing innocent people, reviewing convictions, and ensuring that nobody remains imprisoned because of political decisions.

Source 4: https://www.diariocolatino.com/movir-exige-a-bukele-liberar-a-los-inocentes-no-queremos-libertades-condicionadas-queremos-justicia/

Human rights defender Roxana Cardona harassed by Bukele

Criminal defense lawyer and human rights defender Roxana Cardona reported the presence of National Civil Police (PNC) officers at her home on Monday, October 12, 2026, describing it as “surprising and strange.” According to her social media complaint, officers knocked on the door, asked who lived there, requested her national identity document (DUI), entered it into their system, and photographed her house.

When she asked why, they replied: “It is for location purposes, because this goes to the Ministry of Security and Justice.” Cardona linked the visit to a recent post of hers and held the authorities responsible for any situation threatening her safety, her family, or her home.

Cardona is a critic of the state of exception because it validates the absence of due-process guarantees, the presumption of innocence, and the right to an effective defense. She has supported constitutional challenges. While the government defends the measure for its results against gangs, human rights organizations and lawyers report arbitrary arrests and obstacles to defense. After the complaint became known, opposition sectors suggested that the police visit could have been retaliation for her criticism.

The police action requires an official PNC explanation to determine whether it was legitimate or improper. The complaint has yet to be investigated or clarified.

Source 5: https://www.diariocolatino.com/roxana-cardona-denuncia-extrana-sorpresiva-presencia-policias-vivienda/

Keiko Fujimori will visit CECOT and meet with Bukele

Keiko Fujimori assumed Peru's presidency on July 28, 2026, for the 2026-2031 term. The Peruvian president confirmed on Friday that she would make an official visit to El Salvador in late October amid an internal security crisis caused by a significant rise in extortion and homicides, which has reduced her popularity in her short administration. Fujimori said her October 29-30 trip would focus on security and include a visit to the Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT), 81 kilometers from the Salvadoran capital. During her election campaign, she promised to build a similar prison in Peru.

More than two months into her administration, Fujimori's anti-crime plans have failed to curb extortion or homicide in Peru. Disapproval of her administration rose to 48%, while approval dropped 15 points to 42%. In August, disapproval stood at 25% and approval at 57%, according to a national Ipsos Peru poll. Extortion has spread across nearly all of Peru, particularly Lima's outskirts and major cities, despite a plan to protect public transportation workers, who are murdered in front of passengers by extortionists demanding money.

Since August 8, there have been more than 60 armed attacks on public transportation vehicles and 25 murders of transport workers. Despite the creation of “anti-crime police groups,” crime continues to rise. Extortion complaints increased from 2,421 in 2019 to 26,734 in 2025, while homicides rose from 2,385 in 2019 to 3,675 in 2025.

Source 6: https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/keiko-fujimori-visitara-el-cecot-y-se-reunira-con-presidente-bukele-20261012-0052.html

US secretary of state displeased with trade relations with China

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio called Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele on Tuesday to urge him to protect El Salvador's critical infrastructure, including ports, from “malign foreign influences,” apparently referring to China. According to the State Department, both discussed keeping these facilities secure, although the statement did not explicitly mention Beijing.

Rubio also asked El Salvador to join the United States and “like-minded partners” in advancing shared priorities at the United Nations. Specifically, he seeks a vote against Cuba's annual resolution calling for an end to the US embargo, scheduled for October 28 in the General Assembly. In 2025, the text passed with 165 votes in favor, seven against and 12 abstentions; El Salvador was absent.

According to Rubio, “the Cuban regime will not undertake reforms while it believes the international community is on its side.” Bukele has been one of the Donald Trump administration's main Latin American allies. The two governments reached an agreement to deport irregular migrants from the United States to El Salvador's CECOT megaprison.

Rubio also maintains an intensive strategy to reduce China's influence in Latin America, where Beijing has invested heavily in infrastructure. His first trip as secretary of state in 2025 took him to Panama, where he pressured the government to separate the canal from Chinese companies.

Source 7: https://x.com/EFEnoticias/status/2110133062126244287

Allegations of blackmail to secure votes for the blockade against Cuba

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel denounced US pressure on Thursday ahead of another UN vote against the blockade. On X, he said collective punishment of the Cuban people is unjustifiable and that, with the vote approaching, Washington is desperately pressuring sovereign nations to support its genocidal actions. He described the effort targeting leaders and officials as frantic, saying it showed their isolation, lack of genuine support, and that reason was on Cuba's side.

Cuba will soon present its annual UN report, “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba,” which has received overwhelming support from countries for more than three decades. Angola's President João Lourenço highlighted his country's continued position in favor of ending the economic blockade of Cuba as part of its diplomatic work. He noted that the issue has been raised in recent UN General Assemblies and that Angolan diplomacy defended multilateralism and Security Council reform.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, nervous and anxious about another defeat at the United Nations, is pressuring and blackmailing heads of state and government to vote in favor of the blockade in the General Assembly. Through repeated lies and actions, he seeks to silence the collective punishment inflicted on the Cuban people and make the international community complicit in this barbarity.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez, meanwhile, described the new US State Department Trafficking in Persons report, which labels Cuba's medical missions abroad as “forced labor,” as “obsessive persecution.” Rodríguez said Washington was using another “unilateral and mendacious” report to justify its aggressive policy and persecution of Cuban medical cooperation.

The report keeps Cuba in the lowest tier and describes its labor-export program, including medical missions, as a “government policy or pattern of forced labor.” It estimates that approximately 18,000 workers were on missions in 52 countries, many of them healthcare professionals, compared with 26,000 the previous year. It noted that the United States ended the medical cooperation agreement with Guatemala, alleging that Cuban officials recruit workers through deception and threats of reprisals.

Cuban medical brigades, involving more than 600,000 professionals in 165 countries, have been targeted by Trump's Cuba policy through pressure on Honduras, Guatemala, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, which suspended or reformed their medical cooperation. Cuba has repeatedly denied the criticisms, describing them as “fierce pressure” and “blackmail.”

Source 8: https://www.diariocolatino.com/presidente-cubano-denuncia-presiones-de-eeuu-previo-a-voto-en-onu/

Source 9: https://x.com/BrunoRguezP/status/2110383284542705780

Source 10: https://efe.com/mundo/2026-10-10/cuba-estados-unidos-informe-trata-de-personas/

Source 11: https://x.com/EFEnoticias/status/2110133062126244287

Bukele transfers public assets through the DOM to Constructora El Salvador

The Assembly authorized the Directorate of Municipal Works (DOM) to transfer 50 heavy trucks purchased with public funds to Constructora El Salvador, following nearly two hours of debate between the governing party and the opposition. The measure passed with 57 votes in favor and three against.

Claudia Ortiz of Vamos recalled that a $14.1 million transfer was authorized in 2023 and proposed recommending that the Court of Accounts audit the use of the assets. The governing party rejected the proposal. Ortiz said the results of a model that moves public assets into private hands without transparency were unknown.

Marcela Villatoro of ARENA questioned transferring public assets to a private entity. She asked how private companies would be funded with public money and criticized the Assembly's approval of such “nonsense.” She also questioned Constructora's role in “Two Schools a Day,” since the company performs that work using people deprived of liberty to save on labor while charging as a private contractor.

Elisa Rosales of Nuevas Ideas defended the transaction, saying it would provide technical and financial backing to obtain more contracts and undertake large-scale projects. She maintained that everything complied with the legal framework and sought more contracts and profits invested in the territory. William Soriano and Ernesto Castro lied by saying that Constructora is a state-owned company and that its revenues fund DOM projects.

The company's budget, financial statements and number of employees are unknown. It is a corporation with DOM as its majority shareholder, a public-private partnership, and its operations remain classified.

Source 12: https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/polemica-entre-oposicion-y-oficialismo-por-traslado-de-bienes-de-la-dom-a-constructora-el-salvador-20261014-0058.html

Dictatorship drives school-shoe suppliers to ruin

School-shoe suppliers report that the Ministry of Education (MINED) owes them money, plunging their businesses into crisis. Many depend on the program introduced in 2010.

Two examples, using fictitious names: Miguel employed more than 40 workers, mostly women, to make shoes. Last year, MINED called him to sign a contract. He invested in raw materials and manufactured part of the order. Early this year, he waited for the ministry to call, but it never did. Through social media he learned that the government had imported shoes from Brazil. After the imported shoes broke down within days, lasting 15 days according to suppliers, MINED contacted him to deliver what he had produced. Miguel delivered his goods expecting payment, which has still not arrived. The debt forced him to lay off skilled employees, and his machines stand idle.

Samuel is also in crisis: he had completed 85% of his production and delivered what he had, but has not been paid. Uncertainty prevents efficient production, raises costs and affects quality. Both fear accepting local orders in case the government needs them, while also facing competition from cheap shoes.

La Prensa Gráfica asked MINED about the payments and the condition of imported shoes but received no response.

Source 13: https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/relato-las-maquinas-estan-paradas-y-despedimos-al-personal-dijeron-proveedores-de-zapatos-escolares-20261014-0070.html

September ended with 28 bodies found in El Salvador

During September 2026, the account “Desaparecidos SOS El Salvador” reported the discovery of 28 bodies, including four presumed suicides. In nine cases, the deaths were believed to have been violent.

At least 10 discoveries had a cause of death “to be determined,” which the authorities did not subsequently disclose. Six bodies were found in river ravines. The PNC reported eight homicides nationwide in September, three of which matched cases reported by the account.

A security expert who requested anonymity to avoid reprisals said the account's data reflect “more crimes than are officially reported,” and that many bodies found resulted from human intervention “and should be reported as murders.” Many cases point to scenarios where someone else caused the death. They should therefore be counted as homicides once that intervention is confirmed; instead, the data remain as they are, while the official count states that “there was no crime,” the expert said.

The specialist added that “it is indisputable that violent deaths are currently occurring in El Salvador which the authorities conceal through various means, including not counting them as homicides. This leads to substantial underreporting.” La Prensa Gráfica asked the PNC and Ministry of Public Security and Justice but had received no response by publication time.

Source 14: https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/septiembre-cerro-con-hallazgo-de-28-cadaveres-en-distintos-puntos-de-el-salvador-20261006-0036.html

Final comparison: Bukele's dictatorship is guilty of crimes against humanity

The original report's final table compares sources, figures for innocent people deprived of liberty, and observations. Its contents are reproduced below by source.

Nayib Bukele, October 13: His plan envisages early release for 45-55% of 96,500 people deprived of liberty, between 43,000 and 53,000 “collaborators.” Bukele concluded that between 45% and 55% of detainees “were not THAT guilty and would benefit from early release.” He cited a current total of 96,500 detainees. Initially, he acknowledged a 1% error rate, then that around 8,000 detainees had already been released. Now he no longer acknowledges error: “There are no innocent people, only collaborators.”

Nayib Bukele, October 16: He changed the number to only 10,626 “collaborators,” saying he had reviewed the figures “according to dangerousness.”

Socorro Jurídico Humanitario (SJH): Documented 470 people detained under the state of exception who died in state custody; 94% were neither gang members nor linked to gangs. This amounts to 442

innocent people, 94% of 470. SJH used the following criteria: formal recruitment as a gang member; reclassification of “support bases”; and absence of criminal or gang-related records.

Informe Semanal (IS): If SJH's figure of 94% innocent people is extrapolated to all detainees under the state of exception, the number would be 90,710, or 94% of 96,500. A statistically significant sample of the population of detainees, 96,500 according to Bukele on October 16, 2026, would be 383 people, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. In the absence of information, due to secrecy decreed by the dictator, there is no way to verify records or other parameters among detainees. Informe Semanal extrapolated SJH's data on the premise that its sample is statistically representative, in the absence of official information such as case files, which are withheld even from legal representatives.

El País, Spain: “More than 33,000 people detained by Bukele were not listed as gang members in police records.” Documents that 36% of people arrested under the state of exception in El Salvador had no prior records and were not listed as gang members in previous police files, estimating more than 33,000 innocent people. Total arrests as of March 25, 2026, were 91,628. It cross-references police intelligence reports with official arrest figures and concludes that more than 33,000, or 36%, had not been profiled as criminals or gang members before the measure. Its data come from three internal PNC intelligence reports obtained through the Guacamaya Leaks mass email leak.

Movement of Victims of the Regime (MOVIR) and Community Human Rights Defense Unit (UNIDEHC): Evidence of the innocence of 258 detained people was delivered to the human rights commissioner and the presidential office, CAPRES, in December 2024. Information was obtained from relatives, neighbors, schools, employers and others, including employment and school records and community references showing daily activities unrelated to gangs. Certificates of clean criminal records were obtained from the Office of the Attorney General for Legal Assistance (PGR). All material was delivered to Bukele's human rights commissioner and directly to CAPRES. Following delivery to CAPRES, the PGR received orders to stop issuing criminal-record certificates to relatives and public and private defenders, forcing the evidence-gathering process to stop. Bukele's commissioner resigned after the arrest of defender Ruth López, officially suspending all follow-up.

Source 15: https://es.surveymonkey.com/learn/research-and-analysis/sample-size-calculator/

Source 16: https://elpais.com/america/2026-03-28/mas-de-33000-detenidos-por-bukele-no-figuraban-como-pandilleros-en-los-registros-policiales.html

Uncertainty and monstrously false convictions cannot continue! Deaths and torture under state custody must stop! Whether 30,000, 50,000 or 70,000 innocent people, thousands of families are also being tortured and impoverished! The only path to the truth is transparency. Bukele must give relatives and legal representatives access to criminal case files. There have already been 570 deaths under state responsibility. How many more will be necessary?