

Open Letter to the Archbishop of San Salvador and the Government of El Salvador.

We, the undersigned Salvadorans residing in the exterior and friends in the international community who are in solidarity with the people of El Salvador express our profound rejection of the surprise closure of Tutela Legal by the Archdiocese of San Salvador this past 30th of September 2013, an action carried out by Archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas. For more than 30 years, Tutela legal has been a bastion of the most poor and dispossessed sectors in their struggle for truth and justice. Inspired by the legacy of Monseñor Romero, Tutela Legal has been dedicated to accompanying people who have suffered and it has documented the systematic violation of human rights and crimes against humanity in great detail. So long as there is no justice or reparation for the victims, the mission of Tutela Legal cannot be abandoned. We are particularly concerned about the context in which this decision, without consultation, has been taken by Archbishop Escobar Alas. At a time when the Supreme Court has accepted a request to examine the constitutionality of the general amnesty law, the evidence of the violations of human rights collected by Tutela legal has become an inconvenient reality for those who seek to conserve the status quo and maintain a state of impunity. In this sense we consider alarming and dangerous the vulnerability to which more than 50,000 archival documents collected over the course of Tutela Legal's existence are being exposed.

We support the measures suggested by the Office of the Defense of Human Rights (PDHH) to guarantee the integrity and preservation of the archives in accordance with the standards of international law. It is necessary, as stated in the PDHH resolution, to safeguard the privacy of the victims and witnesses who may be put at risk should the archives not be adequately secured. For these reasons we urgently request that Archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas

1. Revoke the order to close Tutela Legal and immediately reinstate its personnel.
2. Abide by the cautionary measures suggested by the Office for the Defense of Human Rights to guarantee the integrity of the textual, visual, and graphic documentation that constitutes the historical archive of Tutela Legal.
3. Collaborate with the victims and judicial authorities by giving them access to the archives for the purpose of investigating unresolved cases.

We call upon the Government of the Republic to declare the archive of Tutela Legal part of the **National Patrimony** and to take those measures that are appropriate to its preservation and management by an independent institution that specializes in the area of human rights. The archive of Tutela Legal contains our historic memory and for this reason belongs to the people.

Finally, we take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the personnel of Tutela Legal who, without notice, were dismissed from their employment. We appreciate their courageous work, always faithful to the values of solidarity and the search for truth and justice. Thank you for continuing to move forward and for defending the legacy of Monseñor Romero, Monseñor Rivera y Damas and María Julia Hernández. We also express our solidarity with the victims whose archives must be protected, hoping that for them justice will soon prevail.