

An Open Letter to the Members of the El Salvador Legislative Assembly:

We are family members of four American churchwomen who were murdered by the El Salvadoran Armed Forces in December of 1980. Other members of this military, headed by some of the same officers of the High Command, orchestrated the El Mozote massacre a year later in December of 1981, where 998 people were killed, most of whom were children.

In December 2018, Salvadoran Judge Jorge Alberto Guzmán Urquilla ruled that the events in El Mozote constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity, adding to the list of charges that have been brought against Former Defense Minister José Guillermo García and others members of the military.

We know José Guillermo García.

Five years ago, U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals Judge Michael C. Horn ordered General García to be deported from his home in the United States for his role in human rights violations in El Salvador. In his order, Judge Horn catalogued the crimes that took place during Guillermo Garcia's tenure as El Salvador's minister of defense (1979 - 1983) -- the rape and murder of the four Churchwomen, the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, and the slaughter of 998 men, women and children in the mountains of Morazán in December of 1981. In cataloging these atrocities, Judge Horn called them "a deliberate military policy."

But deportation does not replace criminal proceedings.

The awful consequences of El Salvador's state-sponsored terrorism -- sponsored by both the government of El Salvador and the United States -- can only be fully addressed and readdressed through the willingness of both states to let their judicial systems work unimpeded.

In the name of our beloved Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Jean Donovan and Dorothy Kazel, we appeal to you to reject wholeheartedly the bill calling for a second General Amnesty, and thus uphold the High Court's prior ruling of its illegality. Only the rule of law can both right a country's past and end the impunity responsible for so much violence, both then and now.

A General Amnesty, especially in the El Mozote case, would be another denial of the humanity of those who were killed so wantonly. We know that we are not alone in this sentiment and that relatives of the El Mozote victims have also written to you with a similar appeal. We are honored to add our names to theirs.

In hope, we remain, the Clarke-Keogh Family and Ford Family,

Julia Clarke Keogh
Peter Keogh
Pamela Keogh
Deirdre Keogh Anderson
Peter K. Keogh and
Scott Eoghan Keogh
Mary Anne Ford
Miriam Ford
William Ford
Ruth Ford
Elizabeth Ford
Rebecca Ford
John Ford