



Rashi Kesarwani  
Councilmember District 1

CONSENT CALENDAR  
September 14, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

FROM: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author), Councilmember Harrison (Co-Sponsor)

SUBJECT: Resolution in Support of Observance of August 30, the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances in El Salvador

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution in support of retroactively enacting August 30 as a day of observance in recognition of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances in El Salvador.

BACKGROUND

The Salvadoran civil war (1980-1992) was a time of a militarily repressive regime, aided in part by United States tax dollars, that brought about the displacement, death and forced disappearances of hundreds of thousands of Salvadoran civilians. The multi-year armed conflict instigated an exodus of tens of thousands of Salvadoran migrants to the United States, many of whom have family members that were disappeared during this war. Current Salvadoran migrants living in the United States seek to be made whole through recognition of their collective trauma of the forced disappearances symbolized by this resolution, and through the continuing search for the remains of their loved ones.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Mauricio Aquino Foundation (MAF), with offices in Berkeley, was founded in 2013 by Salvadoran Americans with the goal to help their community members find closure to the traumas of forced disappearances experienced during the Salvadoran civil war; educate Americans about the causes of the diaspora that brought Salvadoran migrants to the United States; and build a strong community engaged in social change and empowerment for themselves and the community at large. The MAF has been working in cities with large Salvadoran communities (such as San Francisco; Los Angeles; Washington, D.C.; and Houston) for the past several years

to bring reconciliation to thousands of the grieving families in the United States and in El Salvador by working towards securing the remains of their loved ones. During this time, they have built coalitions with eleven other human rights groups that have put pressure on the U.S. and Salvadoran governments, achieving significant results. In 2016, the sitting Salvadoran president acknowledged the forced disappearance of adults during the civil war. That same year, 26 members of the U.S. Congress signed MAF's letter asking then-President Barack Obama to declassify records of the disappeared in El Salvador's war. And in 2018 the first Salvadoran government-sanctioned commission, called the Commission for the Search of the Disappeared Adults during the Armed Conflict, was established and charged with investigating cases of disappeared relatives. The work continues, however, as the current Salvadoran President and legislature refuse to resolve the disappearances any further. The MAF, in conjunction with The Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) and the SHARE Foundation, is requesting solidarity from city, regional, state, and national elected leaders and governments to pass resolutions in support of the Salvadoran American community as they advance their cause. Such resolutions will help to address collective trauma while reckoning with the past and providing models of truth and reconciliation, and providing some measures of accountability.

#### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This resolution will have no negative environmental effects.

#### CONTACT PERSON

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Attachment:  
Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##, ###-N.S.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF OBSERVANCE OF AUGUST 30 THE  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN  
EL SALVADOR

WHEREAS, the United Nations declared August 30 The International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances; and

WHEREAS, El Salvador endured a civil war (1980-1992) that displaced 500,000 people, forced the migration of 1 Million, killed 75,000, and forcibly disappeared at least another 10,000; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Government supported government and military repression, providing more than \$4 billion in U.S. tax dollars for training and aid to the Salvadoran military; and

WHEREAS, over 2 million Salvadorans currently live and work in the United States forming the third largest Latinx community in the country, with over 740,000 Salvadorans residing in California and over 105,000 in the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, the families and friends of the victims of forced disappearance experience post-traumatic stress disorder, mental anguish, alternating between hope and despair, wondering and waiting, sometimes for years, for news that may never come with the impunity compounding the suffering and anguish; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations declared Forced Disappearance a crime against humanity in its 1992 Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and

WHEREAS, El Salvador's National Assembly and President have not ratified the United Nations International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and

WHEREAS, forced disappearance has frequently been used by dictatorships as a strategy to spread terror within the society, and affects the communities and society as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the victims' families have the right to seek reparations, and to demand the truth about the disappearance of their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, remembering dignifies the victims and their families, and constructs bridges to transmit historical memory to younger generations of Salvadoran Americans; and

WHEREAS, the mothers and relatives of the disappeared in El Salvador and in the Bay Area have been searching for the whereabouts of their loved ones for decades, demanding that the Salvadoran National Assembly recognize and enact August 30 the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Berkeley City Council enacts the observance of August 30 as the International Day of the Victims Enforced Disappearances in El Salvador as a special tribute to U.S. Salvadorans.

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Berkeley City Council calls on the Salvadoran National Assembly to recognize and declare August 30 The International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, and requests that President Biden declassify U.S. records that relate to disappearances and other human rights violations that took place during the civil war.