



For Immediate Release
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Declaration of Archbishop Romero's Martyrdom Powerful Step Forward for Honoring a Human Rights Leader

The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) applauds the news that Vatican theologians reportedly have declared Archbishop Óscar Romero a martyr, a move which is seen as a step towards beatification.

CJA International Attorney Almudena Bernabeu said: "The process and promise to canonize Archbishop Romero is much more than a religious decision, it is the recognition of a person who, like many of those killed and disappeared in El Salvador, demanded justice. This brings hope to the people of Latin America and the world."

Over 75,000 civilians died at the hands of government forces during the civil war in El Salvador (1980-1992). These 12 years of violence were punctuated by three well-known atrocities: the 1980 assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero that sparked the conflict; the rape and murder of four U.S. churchwomen that caused international outrage; and the 1989 Jesuits Massacre that finally compelled the international community to intervene.

Archbishop Romero was the leading voice for victims of government repression and for the poor in El Salvador during the 1970s until his assassination in 1980 by officers in the Salvadoran military.

In 2003, CJA [filed suit](#) against Alvaro Rafael Saravia, a former captain in the Salvadoran Air Force, for his role in the assassination of Archbishop Romero. Saravia, who was living in Modesto, Calif. at the time, was deemed responsible for his role in the assassination and ordered to pay \$10 million to the plaintiff. Until this ruling, no single individual had been held responsible for Archbishop Romero's assassination.

About the Center for Justice and Accountability

CJA is a San Francisco-based human rights organization dedicated to deterring torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA uses litigation to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develop human rights law, and advance the rule of law in countries transitioning from periods of abuse. www.cja.org

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