



2025 Security Letter

November 08, 2024

CRISPAZ is very excited that you plan to visit with the people of El Salvador and are ready to welcome you. In preparation for your visit, we would like to address specific issues regarding the safety of your group.

CRISPAZ prioritizes the safety of your delegation. Our staff in El Salvador continuously monitors situations that may impact delegation safety.

For 40 years, our delegations have always been safe. We have taken, and continue to take, active security measures to provide a safe and meaningful experience in El Salvador. Throughout the years, we have not experienced any incidents where the well-being of our delegation participants has been threatened due to security risks or natural disasters.

In 2023, the official numbers from the Salvadoran government reported 3.4 million visitors to El Salvador. As of June 2024, 2 million tourists have visited the country, with most visitors coming from the United States and the rest from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Canada.

U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory (level 2) Updated November 8, 2024

On November 8, 2024, The United States Department of State updated its travel advisory level and lowered it to a **2** due to a significant decrease in gang-related activity and associated crime over the past two years. This decline includes reductions in both violent crimes and murders.

While we recognize that El Salvador is still recovering from a prolonged civil war that ended in 1992 and continues to face challenges such as poverty, violence, and other social issues, the country is generally safe for residents and even safer for visitors. Gang activity and crime have significantly decreased, with violence primarily occurring in specific areas. CRISPAZ consistently monitors local conditions to ensure that our delegations avoid these high-risk areas.

Delegation Safety

From 1984 until March 2020, CRISPAZ hosted hundreds of delegations. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country was closed. Between 2015 and 2020, CRISPAZ hosted 102 delegations with 1,303 participants. In 2022, we resumed in-person delegations and hosted 12 delegations with 147 participants. In 2023, 23 delegations with 280 participants were hosted; in 2024, we have hosted 23 delegations with 290 participants. There are 2 more delegations with 41 participants expected before 2024 ends. It's important to note that all CRISPAZ delegations have been free from violence or criminal activity.

Though no program can ensure complete safety, the well-being of CRISPAZ participants is always the top concern. What sets our staff leadership team apart is that they are Salvadorans who are based in El Salvador. Their local expertise allows them to stay vigilant and gather up-to-date information on potential risks.

CRISPAZ Safety Measures

Delegation members are always accompanied and never left to wander on their own. The organization intentionally avoids locations and situations that might be prone to violence, especially those affected by crime, as these have been one of the most common reasons behind the violence.

Housing: Participants are accommodated in a secure guesthouse, where they are accompanied by a CRISPAZ representative. Contact details for both the guesthouse and the representative are provided before the trip. Accommodation in rural areas is meticulously arranged in communities where enduring and well-established partnerships have ensured a long-standing absence of violence.

Transportation: CRISPAZ exclusively partners with a single certified company that undergoes annual certification for this specific service. This company operates well-maintained, modern minibuses to ensure there are no breakdowns. Additionally, all buses are equipped with air conditioning to prevent windows from being opened while in transit.

Program: A CRISPAZ representative consistently accompanies the group, ensuring that participants remain together and move in pairs or groups, particularly in unfamiliar urban or foreign settings. The group will not be taken into any recognized hazardous areas at any point. The Executive Director maintains continuous communication with the CRISPAZ program director and delegation leader while the group is in El Salvador and periodically joins the group during their visit.

We would be happy to offer further assurance regarding the safety of our delegation to El Salvador by connecting you with any of our Board Members or the organizers from the groups that travel with us to El Salvador.

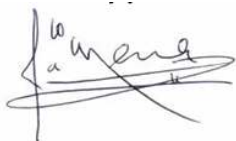
"State of exception"

El Salvador is not under a state of emergency, as the U.S. media occasionally misreport it. The government has declared a "State of Exception" aimed at gang members, which consists of three components.

- It limits the right to assembly, specifically in gang-related areas.
 - The authorities can detain suspected gang members and hold them in jail with no legal representation for 15 days rather than the 72 hours established by law.
 - The government can engage in wiretapping without the need for a warrant.
- During the State of Exception, the operation of religious institutions, sports facilities, commercial establishments, academic institutions, restaurants, shopping centers, gyms, movie theaters, concerts, and other regular activities has remained unaffected.

CRISPAZ wants to reassure you that the safety of your delegation is our top priority. Our El Salvador staff constantly monitors situations that may affect visiting groups. During the group's time in El Salvador, they will not travel to or near the areas where violence occurs.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francisco Mena Ugarte". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Francisco Mena Ugarte
CRISPAZ, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Carter
CRISPAZ, Board Chair