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Salvador - Mining

President of El Salvador asks for caution regarding mining exploitation projects

The president of El Salvador, Elias Antonio Saca, on Tuesday assured that "in principle" he is against the concession of permits for new mining in the country and asked Congress to study this topic in depth.

"The issue of mining is a topic that must be studied in depth. I understand that the officials have formed a commission (and) that a law must be made, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of the Economy are working hand in hand with the representatives", Saca assured at a press conference.

"What I am saying is that, in principle, I am not in favor of authorizing those permits", the president said in reference to the 26 mining projects that are requesting exploitation permits.

Mining is opposed by the church and the left-wing opposition, since it is considered to contaminate the aquifers and to destroy the environment in general, within the limited territory of 20,742 km² of El Salvador.

"We want to generate a space to reflect on the benefits or disadvantages of mining. And after we reflect on it, and we're shown proof that green mining exists and that it is possible to grant the exploitation permits, which is what we have not turned over to them, at that moment a law must be made to leave everything very clear", emphatically declared President Saca.

Last February, the Salvadoran Congress began the consultations for the approval of this polemic law with warnings from environmental organizations and the Church that ask representatives to act "prudently" alleging that the health of the population is in jeopardy.

One of the first to oppose these mining projects was the archbishop of San Salvador, Fernando Sáenz, who considered the use of cyanide and cadmium for gold extraction unacceptable, since they were considered "extremely poisonous" and because they "contaminate the aquifers".

Mining companies, to alleviate the criticism, have emphasized in different messages the benefits of the so-called "green mining" for the country, which, with new techniques - they assure will reduce damage to the environment.

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