Statement of Support and Solidarity to Milagro Sala Calling for Her Immediate Release

As a movement engaged in promoting more just, equal, and accountable societies, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is a firm supporter of the right to protest. Participation in peaceful protests is a way of exercising other human rights, such as the rights to freedom of expression, to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and to participate in political and public life. We are committed to challenging laws and practices that prevent people from protesting or expressing their views.

In 2018, in a statement of support and solidarity adopted at the WILPF Congress in Ghana, we called for the immediate release of Indigenous and social activist Milagro Sala, leader of the Tupac Amaru Neighborhood Organization, who has been arbitrarily detained since January 2016 for organising a peaceful social protest in the Jujuy province of Argentina.

At its 2022 Congress, WILPF reiterates its call for Milagro Sala to be immediately released and be provided with reparation and remedy, including compensation and guarantees of non-repetition.

WILPF further calls for an immediate end to the harassment and criminalisation that Sala and her organisation have been experiencing since Gerardo Morales took office as the Governor of the Jujuy province in 2015.

Milagro Sala is an Indigenous, social, political, trade union leader and a member of the Parliament of Mercosur. She has been carrying out her role since the 1990s in the province of Jujuy. WILPF Argentina has declared her an honorary member of the Section and a “godmother” of the radio programme which they have been broadcasting since early 2021.

WILPF Argentina has pointed out that when former Argentinian President Mauricio Macri took office in 2015, the persecution of Milagro Sala and other social activists intensified. Argentinian human rights organisations and social organisations, labour unions, and the current Argentinian President,
Alberto Fernández, have been demanding her freedom and that of other political prisoners of the Macri government.

Despite repeated recommendations from international and regional human rights mechanisms, Milagro Sala remains in detention.

After examining her case in 2016, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted Opinion No. 31/2016 in which it qualified Milagro Sala’s detention as arbitrary and requested the government “to immediately release Ms. Sala and to afford her appropriate reparation, including compensation”.

That same year, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) requested Argentina to adopt precautionary measures to guarantee her rights to life and personal integrity and recommended alternative measures to detention. In November 2017, having assessed that “judicial authorities in Jujuy had made decisions that far from comply with the precautionary measures issued by the Commission and that, on the contrary, put the beneficiary in a situation of greater risk”, IACHR referred the matter to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In 2018, in a unanimous ruling, the Supreme Court of Justice of Argentina enjoined the judiciary of Jujuy province to urgently adopt the measures requested by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

In June 2021, a local court in Jujuy added new charges to Sala’s case and increased her prison sentence. The Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) has referred to “an unleashed persecution against her involving different criminal charges aimed exclusively at ensuring her detention and keeping her in pre-trial imprisonment”.

In October 2021, CELS, together with Abogadas y abogados del Noroeste Argentino en Derechos Humanos y Estudios Sociales (ANDHES), submitted a new complaint against Argentina to IACHR.

Milagro Sala was recently hospitalised due to a deep vein thrombosis and had to endure harassment from the Jujuy police, who put armed police officers in the room where she was hospitalised, going so far as to force her to receive a judicial notification that a new case had been opened in person while she was under the effect of sedative medications.

Despite all the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, not only has the process of criminalisation against Milagro Sala not ended, but in recent days there have been searches and seizures. On 18 July 2022, the media reported on the persecution that social organisations are suffering in the province of Jujuy.

WILPF stands in solidarity with Milagro Sala and political prisoners as well as all others who are enduring persecution for exercising their legitimate right to protest.

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD, UNESCO and UNEP.
Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF.