WEEKLY REPORT

september 28 to october 4, 2026

> ***"All the criminal might of the empire has not managed, nor will it ever manage, to bend Cuba!"***

CUBA HAS INSTALLED PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS IN:

99% OF POLYCLINICS	**47%** OF HOSPITALS	**99%** OF MATERNITY HOMES	**98%** OF FUNERAL HOMES
89% OF BANKS	**72%** OF NURSING HOMES & SENIOR CENTERS	**16%** OF HOMES FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE	**SOURCE** WWW.GRANMA.CU

Miguel Díaz-Canel, President of the Republic of Cuba

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WEEKLY COMMENTARY

The week leaves a heavy balance for El Salvador, marked by severe economic pressure on households and deepening institutional fractures.

Who wins and who loses by reducing the workweek to 4 days while maintaining 44 working hours? The dictatorship plans to overexploit the working class—already impoverished by inflation, low wages, and high cost of living—by considering "reducing" the current 5-day workweek (40 working hours) to just 4 days of 44 working hours (meaning 11 hours daily instead of 8). The measure, as announced in a distorted manner, claims it will benefit workers when in reality it will exploit them even more excessively.

Following a mockery of a public consultation that ended this week, Bukele intends to implement the new 11-hour workday through a decree of the dictatorship which, as usual, would be hastily approved by his puppet deputies without allowing workers to present arguments or be heard. Thus, as always, the working people will be sacrificed—already squeezed mercilessly and set to be exploited further under this reform.

Let's break down the reality: Currently, workers are paid for 5.5 days of 8-hour workdays (44 weekly hours). If an employer needs to extend daily shifts, the law requires paying overtime at double the standard rate. If overtime is performed at night, additional night-shift bonuses must legally apply (a 25% surcharge over regular hourly wages).

Under the government's proposal, by failing to pay the 3 additional daily hours as overtime, employers would avoid paying at least 48 working hours per month per employee—equivalent to withholding 6 full days of salary every month.

Additionally, this measure will severely harm the quality of life of male and female workers and their families. In El Salvador, workers spend between 3 to 4 hours daily commuting to and from work. Under an 11-hour shift, they will have to dedicate 14 to 15 hours daily to work-related obligations, leaving barely 9 hours for sleep, childcare, preparing meals, cleaning, and laundry. Given that domestic labor falls disproportionately on women, female workers will be doubly affected, forced to reduce rest and sleep to dangerous minimums. Families—especially children—will receive little to no parental guidance as parents are forced to increase corporate profit margins without receiving any additional compensation.

Furthermore, if approved, this reform will eliminate the option to work paid overtime to earn extra income when needed.

On the economic front, the week confirms a persistent pattern: higher debt, greater opacity, and an increasingly suffocated population. The urban basic basket rose by $13.94 in 2026 to reach $264.73, with sharp increases in basic staples like eggs, beans, and vegetables. This impact hits those living on the brink of survival hardest.

Meanwhile, public debt has surpassed $35,038 million dollars—an increase of $15,230 million compared to 2019 levels—with the aggravating factor that this massive debt has brought zero improvement to public services. The government also announced a freeze on public transit fares until 2027 without increasing subsidies, a move that the National Transport Roundtable warns will trigger a drop in service quality and a reduction in operating bus units.

Adding to this is another major corruption scandal: the COATL case, a fiber-optic firm linked to officials close to Bukele that received $19.4 million in government contracts and a $28.6 million BANDESAL development bank loan despite documented corruption allegations.

On the social front, two grave reports shake the State of Exception: widespread extortion targeting families of detainees (selling inmate information, photos, and updates for $100 to $1,000) and a devastating report by Human Rights Watch documenting over 3,000 arbitrarily detained children and 1,000 convictions involving torture and abuse.

RELEVANT NEWS

BUKELE ENDS "CONSULTATION" ON WORKDAY REFORM[1]

The Ministry of Labor announced the conclusion of the public consultation on the labor workday reform. Labor Minister Rolando Castro claimed the final proposal would be "comprehensive, fair, and modern," adapted to labor market challenges, and presented to President Nayib Bukele. The High Council of Labor created a technical commission in August that claims to have consulted various sectors (though it refused to await the opinion of the International Labour Organization - ILO regarding potential labor rights violations).

Key proposals include 4-day workweeks at 11 hours per day, or four 10-hour days plus one 4-hour day. ANEP (representing the private sector) requested that changes remain optional per economic sector. The Trade Union Union (pro-government unions) backed the proposals while asking for transportation, housing, and break provisions. Although the Labor Code sets a 44-hour weekly limit, many Salvadorans work far more: the BCR's Financial Inclusion Survey revealed 36.4% work 45–60 hours weekly and 12.4% exceed 60 hours. Only 37.4% work standard 25–44 hours.

[1] https://diario.elmundo.sv/economia/ministerio-de-trabajo-finaliza-esta-semana-consulta-para-reformar-la-jornada-laboral

"EL NIÑO" WILL NEGATIVELY IMPACT PUBLIC HEALTH[2]

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) warned that the intensification of El Niño in Latin America should not be viewed merely as a rain and flooding event, but as severe stress on public health systems. According to PAHO, temperature and rainfall anomalies exacerbate structural health deficiencies across the region, triggering vector-borne disease surges, extreme heatwaves, and healthcare disruptions. Daniel Buss, PAHO's Chief of Climate Change, explained that Pacific sea surface warming—up to 2.5°C above average—alters mosquito habitats, exposing previously disease-free communities to dengue, Zika, and chikungunya.

PAHO identified over 700 health facilities in the Americas vulnerable to extreme weather, flooding, or utility outages. Dr. Ciro Ugarte highlighted that the priority is ensuring healthcare network resilience and activating contingency plans, warning that population displacement to shelters elevates risks of vaccine-preventable outbreaks like measles. Key recommendations include early warning systems between meteorological agencies and health ministries, medical protocols for heatwaves, and urban vector control.

BUKELE RECEIVED OVER $60,000 MILLION, BUT EXTREME POVERTY GREW[3]

Between June 2019 and December 2025, the Salvadoran government received $41,528 million in tax revenues and $18,642 million in loan disbursements, according to Central Reserve Bank data. In total, the administration handled $60,170 million—more money than the previous two presidential administrations combined over ten years.

Despite this unprecedented influx of capital, the number of citizens living in extreme poverty expanded by nearly 136,000 people during this period, climbing from 368,345 to 504,320 according to official household surveys.

What did the government do with all that money? There is a stark contrast between the current administration's first six and a half years and the ten years of the prior two governments. Together, those previous administrations received $52,526 million in tax revenues and loan disbursements—$7,644 million less over 10 years than the current government received in 6.5 years—yet they lifted 544,223 people out of extreme poverty, reducing the total count from 912,568 to 368,345. Given this sharp contrast, it seems paradoxical that much of the public continues to support Bukele while rejecting past leaders. The explanation lies in the current administration's vast media manipulation capacity and the deep crisis facing opposition parties, allowing Bukele to dictate his own narrative of past and present.

[2] https://www.eldiariodehoy.com/noticias/nacionales/ops-advierte-que-el-nino-empeora-los-riesgos-para-la-salud-publica-en-america-latina/94561/2026/
[3] Interview with economist César Villalona by Radio Izcanal 92.1 FM El Salvador. https://izcanal.org

BASIC BASKET INCREASES BY $13.94 IN 2026, FROM $250.79 TO $264.73, ACCORDING TO ONEC[4]

According to the National Statistics and Census Office (ONEC), the Urban Basic Food Basket increased by $13.94 USD in 2026, a blow directly felt in consumer wallets. A survey by LA PRENSA GRÁFICA in San Salvador's Historic Center revealed that citizens perceive the largest price hikes in eggs, beans, fruits, and vegetables. Merchant Alison Rivera noted that eggs and beans saw steep rises: previously $1 bought 5 eggs, but now buys only 4, while a pound of beans rose from $2.15 to $2.25. She also cited hikes in onions, squash, and dairy, noting she cannot pass full costs to customers who constantly demand discounts.

Blanca Parra stated wages are insufficient: despite earning $50 above minimum wage, she cannot buy necessary goods and relies on salary advances. Jonathan Guevara, a diabetic citizen, mentioned fruit prices doubled from 4-5 items per dollar to just 2, while egg crates rose from $3.50 to $5-$6.

NATIONAL TRANSPORT ROUNDTABLE (MNT) OPPOSES FARE FREEZE[5]

The MNT warned that freezing public transit fares until 2027 will degrade service quality and reduce active fleet units. The Legislative Assembly approved a reform prohibiting fare adjustments until December 31, 2027, fast-tracked at the Executive's request to protect user finances.

Lucio Vásquez of the MNT called the measure "more of the same," asserting that without structural adjustments, service frequency and safety will decline. He noted state subsidies ($250 per minibus, $500 per bus) were established when diesel cost under $3/gallon, compared to today's $4.86/gallon, while passenger fares have remained frozen for 20 years. By December 2026, nearly 987 units will reach their legal lifespan limit, with 75% unable to be replaced, reducing active vehicles to barely 8,000—far below the required 11,000.

RELATIVES DENOUNCE "EXTORTION RENTS" IN PRISONS FOR INMATE INFORMATION[6]

Families of prisoners detained under the State of Exception report receiving unsolicited calls offering status updates on inmates in exchange for money. LA PRENSA GRÁFICA verified social media posts selling data, with families paying $100 to $1,000 for news or photos—while many others were scammed. Information sold includes:

- Health status and medical conditions of the detained relative.
- Current legal process status, if any exists.
- Inclusion in the "Zero Idleness Plan" (including work site locations).
- Scheduled medical appointment times and hospital transfer details.

In one case, a mother named "Rosa" paid $400 for a photo and news that her diabetic son was receiving treatment at Zacamil Hospital. The prison system has provided no explanation regarding internal data leaks.

[4] https://x.com/prensagrafica/status/2104224636141441124
[5] https://www.eldiariodehoy.com/noticias/nacionales/mesa-nacional-de-transporte-advierte-desmejora-en-el-servicio-tras-congelamiento-de-tarifas-hasta-2027/94940/2026/
[6] https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/familias-de-capturados-en-regimen-de-excepcion-denuncian-estafas-y-venta-de-informacion-desde-prisiones-20260925-0031.html

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DENOUNCES MASS ARRESTS OF MINORS UNDER STATE OF EXCEPTION[7]

A 114-page report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) reveals that President Nayib Bukele's State of Exception—in force since March 2022—has resulted in over 3,000 minors arbitrarily detained and more than 1,000 convicted on gang affiliation charges. Based on 90+ interviews, HRW documented severe due process violations, torture, ill-treatment, and sexual abuse.

Many children without gang ties were held in appalling conditions: extreme overcrowding, lack of food and medical care, restricted family contact, and co-detention with adults. Authorities took minimal steps to prevent beatings or abuse. Convictions relied heavily on uncorroborated police statements or coerced confessions obtained through abuse or torture. Charges of "illicit association" carry broad definitions and 10 to 20-year prison sentences.

- **Nicolás (16):** Arrested at school in 2022; held 2+ years. Police told his father: *"Your son doesn't exist here."*
- **Óscar (17):** Beaten with nightsticks and forced to kneel naked for hours.
- **Carolina (17):** Held 7 days with adult inmates, then caged with 25 girls; pressured by a judge to plead guilty to assisting MS-13.

PUBLIC DEBT EXCEEDS $35,000 MILLION

Central Reserve Bank Data — Debt grew $15,230 million under Bukele in under 7 years.

PUBLIC DEBT SURPASSES $35,000 MILLION[8]

The Central Reserve Bank reported total public debt reaching $35,038 million as of August 2026—an increase of $15,230 million compared to $19,808 million in 2019. In six years and eight months, Bukele's administration accumulated more debt than the previous three administrations combined over 15 years ($12,502 million total growth). Debt will continue expanding in 2027 as the proposed budget requires nearly $2,000 million in financing to cover fiscal deficits, plus $700 million borrowed from pension funds.

BUKELE GOVERNMENT AWARDS $19.4M CONTRACTS TO COATL, FIRM ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION BY CICIES[9]

El Faro reported that fiber-optic firm Coatl, S.A. C.V. received $19.4 million in state contracts and a $28.6 million loan from Bandesal (El Salvador Development Bank). The company was reported for corruption indicators in 2021 by CICIES—the anti-impunity commission created by Bukele and later dismantled by him when it began investigating government corruption involving high-level cabinet members.

[7] https://elpais.com/america/2024-07-16/mas-de-3000-menores-detenidos-y-sometidos-a-violaciones-de-derechos-humanos-durante-el-estado-de-excepcion-de-bukele.html
[8] Interview with César Villalona by Radio Izcanal 92.1 FM. https://izcanal.org
[9] https://x.com/sergioarauz/status/2106041034023313532

Key leaders of COATL include figures close to President Bukele: Ernesto Castro, current President of the Legislative Assembly, served as alternate vice president of COATL in 2018–2019; Claudia Juana Rodríguez de Guevara, a trusted family employee who served as Private Secretary to the Presidency and later Presidential Designate, was vice president of COATL in 2021.

COATL ("SERPENT") is a private infrastructure firm executing National Connectivity Network projects with ETESAL (El Salvador Transmission Company), a subsidiary of state power company CEL. According to its 2025 financial disclosures, COATL holds $15.2 million in active fiber optic contracts. In October 2024, Bandesal approved a 15-year $28.667 million credit line backed by contract guarantees and ETESAL's endorsement. ETESAL's board includes Edwin Patricio Núñez Alguera (former COATL president) and Carolina Recinos (sanctioned for corruption by the U.S.). When Bandesal approved an initial $23.2 million credit line in 2022, Rodríguez de Guevara was both COATL vice president and Private Secretary to the President.

Investigative reports point to a recurring pattern of securing private financing through state contracts, similar to the SIMERCA market scheme where Núñez Alguera mortgaged municipal assets for private financing.

ASTONISHING CAPITAL GROWTH UNDER STATE CONTRACTS

COATL launched in November 2017 with initial capital of **$50,000**. By 2019, it reported **$4,938,212.41**. During the 2020 pandemic lockdown—when thousands of businesses faced bankruptcy—COATL experienced explosive growth to **$34,378,916.10**.

Anti-corruption investigators found extreme price markups: in a direct purchase for Hospital El Salvador totaling $859,000, metal conduit piping priced at $2/meter was sold to the state for **$10.34/meter**, while network data points costing $35 were billed at **$155.46 each**. By year-end 2025, COATL reported **$56,615,027.15** on its balance sheet.

BUKELE & OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN ANOTHER CORRUPTION SCANDAL

Photographic records document President Nayib Bukele flanked by Edwin Patricio Núñez Alguera (current president of state-owned ETESAL) and Ernesto Castro (President of the Legislative Assembly and former ETESAL board member).