

## **El Salvador**

*Background & Introduction:* The smallest country central American country achieved its independence from Spain in 1821. The country was part of the Central American Federation which dissolved in 1839. El Salvador was wracked by violent civil war between 1980 and 1992 and at least 75,000 lives were lost. The country is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the West, Guatemala to the North and Honduras to the east and south. Hurricane Mitch caused considerable loss of life and loss of homes in 1998 (200 dead, 30,000 homeless, 20% of housing damaged). Frequent earthquakes are associated with landslides; two major quakes occurred in 2001 that killed over 2000 persons and injured more than 8000. A drought in 2001 destroyed 80% of the crops and resulted in widespread famine. El Salvador is the most densely populated and most industrialized nation in Central America; only 6% of the country is forested because of agricultural production. Coffee has been a dominant agricultural product but declining global coffee prices have pushed the government to diversity the economy. El Salvador obtains loans for development projects from the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, the Bank for Central American Integration, and certain other international institutions. USAID also has several projects that impact El Salvador. El Salvador has the third largest economy in Central America, and growth has been minimal, but positive in recent years. The trade deficit has been offset by annual remittances from Salvadorans living abroad - 16.6% of GDP in 2005 - and external aid. El Salvador adopted the US dollar as its currency in 2001.

### **GEOGRAPHY:**

*Geographic Coordinates:* 13° 50' N, 88°55' W

*Biogeographic Province:* Neotropical

*Total Area:* 21,040 km<sup>2</sup>

*Terrestrial Area:* 20,720 km<sup>2</sup>

*Water area:* 320 km<sup>2</sup>

*Area Comparison:* Approximately the same size as the state of Massachusetts

*Length of Borders:* 203 km with Guatemala, 342 km with Honduras

*Length of Coastline & Ocean:* 307 km, Pacific Ocean

*Maritime claims:* 200 nautical miles

*Climate:* Tropical; rainy season (May to October); dry season (November to April); tropical on coast; temperate in uplands. El Salvador's tropical climate varies with elevation. The coastal plains along the Pacific are hot, although the humidity is relatively low. Average annual rainfall is about 2 100 mm along the coast, with a rainy season from May through October, decreasing to less than 1 500 mm in the north-west. The average annual temperature of San Salvador is 24°C.

*Terrain:* Mostly mountains with narrow coastal belt and central plateau; two mountain ranges (Central Coastal Range and Northern Range) separate country into distinct regions: southern coastal belt, central valleys and plateaus, and northern mountains. The Central Coastal Range is volcanic. The Northern Range is along the border with Honduras and is home to the Santa Ana Volcano. The central plateau and interior valleys are characterized by fertile volcanic soils while the coastal plain is a 15-30 km wide expanse of alluvial soils. The Lempa is the largest river and flows 320 km to the Pacific.

*Elevation Extremes:* 0 to 2730 m (Cerro El Pital)

*Natural Resources:* hydropower, geothermal power, petroleum, arable land

*Land Use:* arable land: 31.37%; permanent crops: 11.88%; other: 56.75% (2005)

*Irrigated Land:* 450 sq km (2003)

*Natural Hazards:* El Salvador is known as the Land of Volcanoes; frequent and sometimes destructive earthquakes and volcanic activity; extremely susceptible to hurricanes

*Current Environmental Issues:* deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution; contamination of soils from disposal of toxic wastes

*International Environmental Agreements:*

**party to:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands

**signed, but not ratified:** Law of the Sea

*Geography Notes:* smallest Central American country and only one without a coastline on Caribbean Sea

## PEOPLE:

*Population:* 6,822,378 (July 2006 est.)

*Age Structure:* 0-14 years: 36.3% (male 1,265,080/female 1,212,216), 15-64 years: 58.5% (male 1,900,372/female 2,092,251), 65 years and over: 5.2% (male 156,292/female 196,167) (2006 est.)

*Median Age:* total: 21.8 years, male: 20.7 years, female: 22.9 years (2006 est.)

*Population Growth Rate:* 1.72% (2006 est.)

*Birthrate:* 26.61 births/1,000 population (2006 est.)

*Death Rate:* 5.78 deaths/1,000 population (2006 est.)

*Net Migration Rate:* -3.61 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2006 est.)

*Sex Ratio:* at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female, under 15 years: 1.04 male(s)/female, 15-64 years: 0.91 male(s)/female, 65 years and over: 0.8 male(s)/female, total population: 0.95 male(s)/female (2006 est.)

*Infant Mortality:* total: 24.39 deaths/1,000 live births, male: 27.27 deaths/1,000 live births, female: 21.37 deaths/1,000 live births (2006 est.)

*Life Expectancy at birth:* total population: 71.49 years, male: 67.88 years, female: 75.28 years (2006 est.)

*Total Fertility Rate:* 3.12 children born/woman (2006 est.)

*HIV/AIDS prevalence:* 0.7% (2003 est.)

*Number of people with AIDS:* 29,000 (2003 est.)

*HIV/AIDS deaths/year:* 2,200 (2003 est.)

*Nationality:* noun: Salvadoran(s); adjective: Salvadoran

*Ethnic Groups:* mestizo 90%, white 9%, Amerindian 1%

*Religions:* Roman Catholic 83%, other 17%

note: there is extensive activity by Protestant groups throughout the country; by the end of 1992, there were an estimated 1 million Protestant evangelicals in El Salvador

*Language:* Spanish, Nahua (among some Amerindians)

*Literacy:* Definition: age 10 and over can read and write; total population: 80.2% (literacy rates are lower in rural areas, male: 82.8%, female: 77.7% (2003 est.). Education is free through ninth grade; 85% of children attend grades 1-9.

## GOVERNMENT:

*Type of Government:* Republic

*Administrative Divisions:* 14 departments (departamentos, singular - departamento); Ahuachapan, Cabanas, Chalatenango, Cuscatlan, La Libertad, La Paz, La Union, Morazan, San Miguel, San Salvador, San Vicente, Santa Ana, Sonsonate, Usulután

*Capital & Other Large Cities:* Capital: San Salvador, 1,791,700 (metro. area), 504,700 (city proper); Other Large Cities: Santa Ana, 167,200; San Miguel, 145,100; Zacatecoluca, 36,700. Approximately 40% of the population resides in rural areas.

*Independence Day:* 15 September 1821 (from Spain)

*National Holiday:* Independence Day, 15 September (1821) because this day marks the anniversary of independence for five Hispanic countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

*Constitution:* 23 December 1983

*Legal System:* Based on civil and Roman law with traces of common law; judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court

*Suffrage:* 18 years of age; universal

*Executive Branch of Government:*

chief of state: President Elias Antonio SACA Gonzalez (since 1 June 2004); Vice President Ana Vilma DE ESCOBAR (since 1 June 2004); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government

head of government: President Elias Antonio SACA Gonzalez (since 1 June 2004); Vice President Ana Vilma DE ESCOBAR (since 1 June 2004)

cabinet: Council of Ministers selected by the president

elections: President and Vice President elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a single five-year term; election last held 21 March 2004 (next to be held March 2009)

election results: Elias Antonio SACA Gonzalez elected president; percent of vote - Elias Antonio SACA Gonzalez (ARENA) 57.7%, Schafik HANDAL (FMLN) 35.6%, Hector SILVA (CDU-PDC) 3.9%, other 2.8%

*Legislative Branch of Government:*

Unicameral Legislative Assembly or Asamblea Legislativa (84 seats; members are elected by direct, popular vote to serve three-year terms)

elections: Last held 12 March 2006 (next to be held in March 2009)

election results: Percent of vote by party - NA%; seats by party - ARENA 34, FMLN 32, PCN 10, PDC 6, CD 2

*Judicial Branch of Government:* Supreme Court or Corte Suprema (judges are selected by the Legislative Assembly)

*Political Parties and Leaders:*

Christian Democratic Party or PDC [Rodolfo PARKER, secretary general]; Democratic Convergence or CD (formerly United Democratic Center or CDU) [Ruben ZAMORA, secretary general]; Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front or FMLN [Medardo GONZALEZ, coordinator general]; National Conciliation Party or PCN [Ciro CRUZ ZEPEDA, president]; National Republican Alliance or ARENA [Elias Antonio SACA Gonzalez]; Popular Social Christian Party or PPSC [Rene AGUILUZ]; Revolutionary Democratic Front or FDR [Julio Cesar HERNANDEZ Carcamo, coordinator general]

*Environmental Pressure Groups:* none listed

*Environment Minister:* Hugo Cesar Barrera Guerrero

*Ambassador to the United States:* Ambassador Rene Antonio Leon Rodriguez

*Ambassador from the United States:* Ambassador H. Douglas Barclay

### ECONOMY:

*Currency:* U.S. dollar (adopted in 2001; formerly cólon)

*Gross Domestic Product (GDP - official exchange rate):* \$16.52 billion (2005 est.)

*GDP per capita:* \$4,700 (2005 est.)

*GDP by Sector:* agriculture: 9.9%, industry: 30.2%, services: 59.9% (2005 est.)

*Labor Force Size:* 2.81 million (2005 est.)

*Labor Force Distribution:* agriculture: 17.1%, industry: 17.1%, services: 65.8% (2003 est.)

*Unemployment:* 6.5% official rate; but the economy has much underemployment (2005 est.)

*Population below poverty line:* 36.1% (2004 est.)

*Inflation Rate:* 4.7% (2005 est.)

*Investment:* 15.8% of GDP (2005 est.)

*Public Debt:* 46.7% of GDP (2005 est.)

*Agricultural Products:* coffee, sugar, corn, rice, beans, oilseed, cotton, sorghum; beef, dairy products; shrimp

*Industries:* food processing, beverages, petroleum, chemicals, fertilizer, textiles, furniture, light metals

*Electricity Production & Consumption:* Production: 4.158 billion kWh (2004); Consumption: 4.45 billion kWh (2005)

*Electricity Export/Import:* 91 million kWh (2004)/473 million kWh (2004)

*Oil Production & Consumption:* Production: 0 bbl/day (2003 est.); Consumption: 40,000 bbl/day (2005 est.)

*Export Value:* \$3.586 billion (2005 est.)

*Export Commodities:* offshore assembly exports, coffee, sugar, shrimp, textiles, chemicals, electricity

*Export Partners:* US 54.3%, Guatemala 13.4%, Honduras 7.2%, Nicaragua 4.5% (2005)

*Import Value:* \$6.678 billion (2005 est.)

*Import Commodities:* raw materials, consumer goods, capital goods, fuels, foodstuffs, petroleum, electricity

*Import Partners:* US 32.6%, Guatemala 9.7%, Mexico 7.2%, Venezuela 4.9% (2005)

*External Debt:* \$8.087 billion (2005 est.)

*Economic Aid:* \$125 million of which, \$53 million from US (2003)

#### COMMUNICATIONS:

*Number of newspapers:* 3 - La Prensa Grafica, El Mundo, El Diario

*Number of telephone lines:* 971,500 (2005)

*Number of cell phones:* 1,832,600 (2004)

*Number of radio stations:* AM 61 (plus 24 repeaters), FM 30, shortwave 0 (1998)

*Number of television stations:* 5 (1997)

*Internet Hosts/Users:* Hosts: 4,404 (2005)/Users: 587,500 (2005)

#### TRANSPORTATION:

*total number airports/number with paved runways:* 75/4

*Railways (total):* 283 km

*Roadways total: paved, unpaved:* 10,029: 1,986/8043

*Navigable Waterways:* Rio Lempa partially navigable (2004)

*Ports and Terminals:* Acajutla, Puerto Cutuco

## MILITARY:

*Military Branches:* Army, Navy (FNES), Air Force (FAS)

*Military service age and obligation:* 18 years of age for compulsory military service, with 12-month service obligation; 16 years of age for volunteers (2002)

*Military expenditures (total and % of GDP):* 1% (2005 est.)

## OTHER:

*Transnational Issues:* In 1992, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled on the disputed areas along the El Salvador-Honduras boundary, but despite Organization of American States (OAS) intervention and a further ICJ ruling in 2003, full demarcation of the border remains stalled; the 1992 ICJ ruling advised a tripartite resolution to a maritime boundary in the Gulf of Fonseca advocating Honduran access to the Pacific; El Salvador continues to claim tiny Conejo Island, not identified in the ICJ decision, off Honduras in the Gulf of Fonseca. El Salvador is a transshipment point for cocaine; small amounts of marijuana produced for local consumption; domestic cocaine abuse on the rise

*CITES Member:* Entry into CITES 29 July 1987.

*Tourist Attractions/ Tourist Centers:* churches, volcanoes (many with craters including Volcan Izalco, the Lighthouse of the Pacific), 10 river basins, 2 hydroelectric dams in Lempa River, several lakes, beaches on Pacific, surfing. Mayan ruins include: Joya de Cerén, declared as a Heritage for Humanity by UNESCO, 30 kilometers northeast of San Salvador, Tazumal, Guija, San Andres, Cihuata, Corinto. Fifteen tourist centers (Turicentros) that include: Los Chorrros, Balboa Park, The Devil's Doorway, Los Planes Look Out, National Zoo, Panchimalco Indian Village, La Laguna Botanical Garden, David J. Gusman National Museum, San Salvador Volcano, Lago de Ilopango.

*Environmental Reserves:* Cerro Verde Mountain Park, Walter Deinger Park, El Imposible Forest, El Jocotal Lagoon, Montecristo Cloud Forest (in El Trifinio National Park), Nancuchiname.

*USAID Programs:* Mark Silverman, Mission Director. El Salvador Country Plan derived as part of Central America and Mexico (CAM) Regional Strategy. The funds to El Salvador in FY 2006 include Ruling Justly, Economic Freedom and Investing in People. There are additional activities in recent years: Earthquake Recovery Program, Central American Regional Program (G-CAP) with Trade Programs, Environmental Programs, Regional HIV/AIDS programs. There is a Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Bureau in USAID that involves El Salvador. The USAID EGAT (Economic Growth in Agriculture and Trade) provides assistance through the farmer to farmer program. USAID also supports a Center for Excellence for Teachers Training Program that assisted 93 teachers in 74 schools. USAID's Civic Educational for Reform in Central America program assisted in improving quality education in selected rural schools.

In 2005 USAID's Regional Environmental Program for Central America moved from Guatemala to the USAID El Salvador mission. USAID has designed a new Regional Environmental Program which will focus on: (1) Improved End Use Management of Three Critical Watersheds; (2) Increased Harmonization and Enforcement of Environmental Laws and Regulations; and (3) Increased Use of Clean Production Technologies.

PROARCA is the Regional Environmental Program for Central America, funded by USAID. It was created in December 1994 to support the Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES, its Spanish acronym), which was signed by the Central American governments in October 1994. CONCAUSA was renewed and expanded in June 2001. Since 1996, PROARCA has supported the agenda of the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development (CCAD), which is part of the Central American Integration System (SICA). During its first 5 years, PROARCA focused on conservation and natural resources management in the region. The objective for the second five year phase (2002-2007) is to improve environmental management in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (CBM). PROARCA emphasizes its work in territories defined by the watersheds of the Gulf of Honduras and the Gulf of Fonseca (El Salvador), the Mosquitia Coast (Honduras and Nicaragua), and the area from La Amistad to Río Cañas (Costa Rica and Panamá). PROARCA also supports the CCAD's regional biodiversity agenda and development of CCAD's strategic vision for the environment in Central America.

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