



# CENTRAL AMERICA SPECIAL ACTION (CASA)

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CENTRAL AMERICA

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## FURTHER INFORMATION ON CENTRAL AMERICA SPECIAL ACTION CASES

This circular gives further information on a number of Central America Special Action (CASA) cases issued during 1981. The information is listed by country; in each case the date and AI Index number of the CASA is given.

1. CASA 33/81 NICARAGUA: Alberto Suhr Reyes (AMR 43/03/81 11 September and AMR 43/04/81 20 October)

Several AI groups have received a letter from Orlando Matus del Carmen of the Comisión Nacional de Promoción y Protección de los Derechos Humanos, the government National Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights informing them of the release of Alberto Suhr Reyes. He was released on 10 October.

2. CASA 42/81 NICARAGUA: Arrest of Communist Party and Business Leaders (AMR 43/05/81 23 October and AMR 43/06/81 28 October)

Businessmen Enrique Dreyfus, Benjamin Lanzas and Gilberto Cuadra have been sentenced to seven months imprisonment for violation of article 4 of the Law for the Maintenance of Public Order and Security for having "attacked the national economy and security". Leaders of the trade union body CAUS of the Communist Party, Eli Altamirano, Allan Zambrana and Roberto Moreno have also been convicted of having incited the take-over of factories and strike action in violation of section (f) of article 3 of the Law of the State of Economic and Social Emergency that prohibits take-overs and strikes in work places with sentences for this infraction of 29 months imprisonment. This makes a total of 36 months (3 years) imprisonment. Zambrana and Moreno were representatives of the labour sector from CAUS on the Council of State (Consejo de Estado) which is the legislative body of the government. The Council met to agree to withdraw their legislative immunity prior to their detention and trial. The trial was by the first Criminal Judge of Managua district, Felix Trejos Trejos.

Enrique Bolanos was RELEASED on the grounds that he had not signed the COSEP manifesto.

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3. CASA 26/81 HONDURAS: Twenty-two peasants detained (AMR 37/16/81 30 July)

A number of AI groups received the following reply from FUSEP police captain Freddy Funes Ucles in Ocotepeque:

"In this letter I wish to inform you with respect to the 22 peasants, members of the UNC, only 6 were detained on 22 January, and they were transferred to the court of the first instance of this department."

4. CASA 43/81 EL SALVADOR: Recent arrests (AMR 29/77/81 28 October)

Francisco VIDAL MIRANDA, employee of the Ministry of Agriculture  
Maria Celia CLAROS de VIDAL, wife of above  
Omar CLAROS (or CHAVEZ), nephew of Maria Celia CLAROS

They were arrested by uniformed soldiers at 10 pm on 18 October 1981 at their home in Mejicanos, together with another nephew of Maria Celia Claros, José Felipe SANCHEZ. Their bodies were found subsequently near Ayahualo, on the road to La Libertad. They all belonged to the religious community of Colonia San Francisco de Mejicanos.

5. CASA 32/81 EL SALVADOR: Santa Tecla political prisoners on hunger-strike

(AMR 29/62/81 11 September)  
The hunger-strike was ended at the beginning of October 1981 reportedly following the receipt by the prisoners of a letter from the Bishop of Madrid, Spain, reminding them that it is a sin to go on hunger-strike, thereby threatening their own lives.

A number of AI groups had the postcards which they had sent to prisoners returned marked "Salió libre, cambió domicilio". A number of prisoners have been confirmed released but others have been transferred to Mariona prison (AI has received reports that prisoners are regularly transferred without warning between Santa Tecla prison and Mariona prison). A number of releases are mentioned in the following letter from the Minister of Justice, Mario Andino Solano, which was received by several AI groups:

"I am answering your letter dated \_\_\_\_\_ in which you make reference to my statement published in the daily newspaper La Prensa Gráfica dated May 16th. You can be sure that our political prisoners are in good condition, we have paid attention to our principles of honesty and impartiality, also we are working based on our regulations, and we are not concerned with their indictments. We are not interested in their political affiliation or credo. Therefore we have got the responsibility of keeping them safe no matter what they are doing, what they did or what they want.

I'm asking you to take note because I would like you to have a good image of us as we really are.

Mario Morataya  
Jesús Antonio Hernández Morales

all these persons above have already got your greetings cards; but Ricardo

.../...

Alfonso Martínez, Jesús Romeo Galdámez, Romeo Moreira and Rodolfo Molina are no longer in our custody. Although I will send your greetings cards to their present address.

Like you I'm very worried about the Human Rights of the world, now I give my contribution to achieve a fulfillment of this right in my country. I hope in yours things work out really good, at least better than my country, now being caught by international terrorism."

Yours sincerely,

Mario Andino Solano .R.  
Minister of Justice

6. CASA 25/81 GUATEMALA: "Disappeared" workers and peasants (AMR 34/35/81 30 July)

Mariano MANUEL  
Angelina CHEN  
Fernando CHEN

Mariano Manuel and his wife Angelina Chen were found dead on 25 June. Angelina's body was found floating in a river; her husband was found shot and tortured in the village of Choacatzij. Fernando Chen is still "disappeared".

7. CASA 28/81 GUATEMALA: Zonia Calderon de Martell (AMR 34/38/81 25 August)

Zonia Calderon is still "disappeared" following her arrest on 23 July by security forces. On 17 September, her husband Didier Martell, photographer, was found dead in his car, submerged in a canal in Santa Rosa department. Her husband worked for the Information Office of the University of San Carlos. It is not clear whether his death was a political killing.

An AI <sup>member</sup> / received the following reply from Carlos Toledo Vielmann, secretary for public relations of the Guatemalan presidency:

"In reference to your letter of August 31st 1981, I have to inform you that unfortunately we do not yet have any knowledge on the whereabouts of journalist Zonia Calderon de Martell, of the daily El Gráfico .

However I should point out that the government's security forces are the most interested party in establishing what is the situation of Mrs Calderon de Martell. But, as I said, their efforts have been fruitless so far. "

Sincerely,

Carlos Toledo Vielmann  
Public relations secretary  
of the presidency of the republic

.../...

8. CASA 30/81 GUATEMALA/MEXICO: "Disappearances" and extrajudicial killing of peasants by security forces in Peten, Guatemala and subsequent expulsion of Guatemalan peasants from Mexico (AMR 34/39/81 25 August and AMR 34/44/81 25 September)

It is now believed that over 1,800 Guatemalans (not 3,000 - 4,000, as originally reported) were expelled back to Guatemala by the Mexican authorities on 19 July 1981. These Guatemalans had fled across the Usumacinta river into Chiapas, Mexico following the Guatemalan army's attack on El Arbolito and surrounding villages in Peten department in northern Guatemala on 17 June (see AMR 34/39/81). The following were among those expelled to Guatemala on 19 July:

Hermelina Mejía  
Benedicto Paniagua  
Angel Chacón Miguel  
Mario Escobar  
Daniel Rodas Alvarez  
Benjamin Maldonado  
Vidal Romero Rodas  
Carmen Cruz Rodas y Rodas

The Mexican authorities have allowed 46 other Guatemalans to remain in Mexico. Proceso, a Mexican magazine, in its 27 July edition reported that the 46, who are reportedly the families of the survivors from the army attack on El Arbolito on 17 June (see AMR 34/39/81) and the widows of those killed and "disappeared", are staying in a camp in Cuautla in the state of Morelos. The 46 include:

Reginaldo Aguilar with wife and children  
Bonifacio Rodas with wife and children  
Fausto Bravo  
Delfino Cardón  
Sóstenes Cifuentes  
Félicito Acuña

A letter from the Guatemalans who were expelled from Mexico on 19 July addressed to the Mexican government was published in the Mexican newspaper Uno más Uno on 8 October 1981. The following is a translation of the letter:

"To Señor Mexican government: we are writing this in the spirit of bidding farewell; we are going already. What else can we do if this is what you wish? We will return to El Arbolito (The Little Tree) and to La Flor de la Esperanza (The Flower of Hope), although the tree is lopped and our flower is stained; in all, it is better to go and die in one's own country. This is how it has long been.

Forgive our boldness for coming into your territory; but they say that fear does not travel on a donkey and after seeing so many of our own die we had no other remedy but to cross the river. Don't believe that fear is unquenchable; it is that fear is cured with a rifle to protect our children and homes and we don't have that rifle.

.../...

We made a camp and we called it La Esperanza (The Hope), here on the land of people who made space for us, who offered us their pozol (drink made with barley and sugar) and their tortillas and who made room for us. But we had to wait for your response, Señor Mexican government, for us to be able to stay until our country was calm and we could go home again. It is not that we wanted to come as we are deeply attached to our homes, our hills and maizefields because we were born there; there is our umbilical cord and the bodies of our parents. We only asked for lodging where there would be an end to the so frequent defenceless deaths done by the soldiers and kaibiles (special army forces). Only a small piece of land to plant orchards and to live in, and a little piece of land to plant maizefields to get by on.

We believed that you, Señor government, would listen to our petition; but then the captain arrived, dressed in green, like our Guatemalan assassins, and said either you leave in half an hour or we will throw you out by force. And we got together the pots and buckets and kiddies to get on the boat to return to our so mistreated El Arbolito, to our Flor de la Esperanza of which we don't know if there are even little pieces of stalks left. As we did not have the means to defend ourselves there, how much less in foreign lands. We are already going, Señor government, what can we do?

Don't think that in Mexico we would want to receive great honours or enormous salaries, nor to write books, nor to have many things; only a site for a home and a plot of land for the meantime, while the trees and flowers succeeded in obtaining the right to grow in our country.

We would not want much; we are ignorant, we don't have much learning, we have strong arms for the machete, we know how to work, we would not be a burden to you. But you see there is no remedy; as the captain said: "Either you go, or we will force you to go". So we're going already, Señor government; where rifles and blows will rain upon us once again; if it were only for a few days, only to wait for the peace and to be able to go and work again on the other side of the river. Yet we are still hoping that you will let us do that. But remember that on the other side of the river, death is probably waiting for us, but then life will come and that life will skip to the river. Don't forget that life skips over rivers and is contagious; why should we give you thanks, you who denied us a home and work for the meantime? Those who deserve our thanks are those of Benemérito, those of Frontera Corozal, those who offered us maize, medicines, plastic sheets for the rain; those who were sad to see the captain throwing us out. Those are true friends and we will make them a present of life when we find it.

You will see then what they will do with it, and with You, "

Yours sincerely,

1,831 Guatemalan peasants

20 July 1981

Information for CASA participants on follow up to Urgent Action case

- 9, UA 281/80 EL SALVADOR: <sup>Abduction and</sup> Killing of four US churchwomen (AMR 29/66/80  
4 December and AMR 29/67/80 5 December

On 30 September 1981 the following report was released by the United States Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights:

"Lawyers Committee releases report on the investigation into the killing of four American churchwomen in El Salvador"

Family members of four slain American churchwomen today presented a report to Salvadorian President José Napoleon Duarte which concludes that there are serious doubts as to whether the Government of El Salvador has investigated the crimes adequately. The Report, which was prepared for the families by the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, notes that after more than nine months the Salvadorian Government continues to be either unable or unwilling to indict anyone for the murders.

Lawyers Committee Chairman Marvin E. Frankel stated that the circumstances of the murder point "ominously toward the likely guilt of government security personnel." Mr Frankel, a former federal judge in New York, observed:

"the government's apparent failure to investigate effectively the murders of the churchwomen is but a single incident that is part of a broad pattern of unrestricted violence by government security forces and the general breakdown of the rule of law in El Salvador."

The report raises questions about several major aspects of the current investigation:

1. Although six national guardsmen were arrested in May in connection with these murders, none have been indicted, and no date has been set for trial.
2. Despite charges that security force officers may have been involved in the crime or in impeding its investigation, there is nothing to suggest that these actions are being examined.
3. While the FBI was asked to give technical advice and support, there is information suggesting that its advice has not been followed.
4. While the State Department has repeatedly stressed that it is doing everything in its power to press the investigation, it has ignored repeated requests made by the families of the victims (since March 1981) for the Department to send a high level delegation to El Salvador to report on the progress of the investigation.

In addition to submitting the report to the Salvadorian Government, the Lawyers Committee is presenting copies to the Reagan Administration, members of the US Congress, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States.

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Additional copies of the report are available from the Lawyers Committee.

The Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights is a nongovernmental human rights organization that seeks to promote international human rights law. The Committee serves as a legal resource centre for various human rights organizations, primarily in the New York area. In the past three years, it has trained and utilized more than one hundred volunteer lawyers to help promote international human rights standards here and abroad."