

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
10 Southampton Street
London WC2E 7HF
England

CENTRAL AMERICA

Responses received to recent Urgent Actions and CASA Actions

EL SALVADOR

1. UA 182/80, AMR 29/39/80 Roberto FUNES Cartagena, Jaime JILIS, Luis Alberto DIAZ - 18 August 1980

A german AI member received the following letter from the Archbishop of San Salvador, Mons. Rivera Damas reporting that Luis Alberto DIAZ is still alive but that Roberto FUNES Cartagena and Jaime JILIS were assassinated.

(TRANSLATION)

26 September 1980

"Dear Sirs:

I acknowledge receipt of your note supporting our efforts to work on behalf of those who suffer infringement of their most basic rights as human beings. I cordially thank you for your support.

I can assure you that, as a responsibility of our ecclesiastical position, we will always condemn every violation to human dignity, no matter by whom such violation is carried out.

I greet you cordially in Christ.

Mons. Arturo Rivera Damas
Bishop-Apostolical-
Administrator

Note: Only Luis Alberto Diaz is alive. The others were killed."

EL SALVADOR

2. UA 199/80, AMR 29/44/80 Dr Fernando MELENDEZ - 2 September 1980

An AIUSA member received the following letter from Dr José Ramon Avalos of the Salvadorian junta reporting that Dr Fernando Melendez has been provisionally released pending trial and that the two patients arrested with him are receiving medical treatment.

(TRANSLATION)

2 October 1980

"Dear Sir:

I refer to your note of 8 September in which you ask for information concerning Dr Fernando Melendez and two of his patients, arrested on 28 August.

With respect to them, I inform you that the above mentioned gentlemen were detained and consigned to the First Penal Court on 3 September 1980. Dr. Melendez

was released after inquiries had been carried out (72 hours), and at present the legal proceedings are being carried out according to our laws. The patients are receiving medical attention in the Rosales Hospital in San Salvador..... "

Yours sincerely,

Dr José Ramon Avalos
Navarrete
Member of the Salvadorian
Junta

* * * * *

EL SALVADOR

3. UA 134/80, AMR 29/29/80 Mass arrests at National University - 30 June 1980

Many AI groups received the following letter from the Secretary of the Salvadorian Commission on Human Rights, Gloria Hilda Salazar. Sra Salazar does not mention the mass arrests at the university, but thanks the group for their international support on behalf of persons detained in El Salvador.

(TRANSLATION)

30 July 1980

"Dear Sir:

With this letter, we wish to thank you for the demonstration of solidarity through the international campaigns on behalf of persons who have been captured or disappeared.

The Salvadorian people in general need international solidarity, as in these times, they are suffering a savage repression at national level, which is acquiring the character of genocide, which is stronger and more tragic in the countryside, as they indiscriminately assassinate children, women and old people; adding to the bloodshed with young adolescents.

We wish to inform you of the effectiveness of solidarity campaigns, since on many occasions they have been successful in getting military blockades withdrawn and the release of persons, when these are still alive.

We know that you through your words, whether asking, demanding or condemning, show continuously your wish for the freedom of a people oppressed like ours, and for which we will carry on struggling, no matter what costs we have to suffer. We maintain our confidence in your vigilant attitude towards our people and their struggle for freedom.

We want to take this opportunity to inform you of the raid suffered by the Socorro Juridico (Legal Aid Department) of the Archbishopric; we believe that these actions were aimed at destroying the evidence collected together through testimonies and statements made by people who have suffered violations of human rights and in some cases eye witnesses to individual and collective murders.

Finally we ask you to continue your vigilant attitude for the development of our work, which through its nature, our existence is becoming more and more difficult.

We would like to congratulate you for the work carried out in defence of Human Rights;"

Yours sincerely,

For the Commission of Human Rights of El Salvador

Sra Hilda Gloria Salazar
Secretary

* * * * *

GUATEMALA

4. UA 85/80, AMR 34/23/80 Workers at the Coca Cola Bottling Plant - 9 May 1980

Many AI groups received the following letter from the Vice President of the External Affairs Division of the Coca Cola Company headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia USA.

6 August 1980

Dear _____,

Thank you very much for your letter expressing concern over the violence in Guatemala. Let me assure you that we too are shocked by the violence that has been endemic to Guatemala for some years. An article in January's ATLANTIC MONTHLY states that 40,000 people have been killed by death squads since 1954. The Jesuits in Central America have stated that "the first ten months of 1979 saw 3,253 murders carried out by death squads operating with absolute impunity."

In this environment, violence has been directed against employees of a bottling plant in Guatemala City, Embotelladora Guatemalteca S.A. (EGSA). This plant is an independently owned bottling company. The plant has contracts to bottle a number of soft drinks including Coca Cola, 7-UP, Dr. Pepper, and Grapette.

We must stress that EGSA is not controlled or managed by The Coca Cola Company which has no official presence in Guatemala. While the Company is horrified at the events taking place there, it is limited with respect to what it can do about the violence or establishing the whereabouts of victims of it. We have, however, made an effort to alleviate the specific situation in EGSA.

Some of the violence against EGSA employees may be related to a labour conflict at the plant, including differences between representatives of a union and representatives of an association of plant employees. The Coca Cola Company has encouraged the owner of the bottling plant to take steps to alleviate the labour conflict, or sell the plant to someone who will. We are making every effort to find a local buyer who would negotiate with the factions and come to an acceptable agreement. In fact, on July 23, 1980, a letter of intent was signed between Mr. John C. Trotter, representing current ownership, and potential buyers. At that time The Coca Cola Company confirmed that it would finance the purchase subject to a purchase agreement and a written loan agreement satisfactory to the Company.

Meanwhile, the Company has communicated its concern for the welfare of the workers at the plant to the Guatemalan authorities.

Let me again assure you that The Coca Cola Company shares your concern over the violence in Guatemala including the violence directed at EGSA employees and will continue its efforts to find a solution which will bring an end to these conditions.

Thank you for your interest."

Sincerely,

Dianne McKaig
Vice President
External Affairs Division.

5. A British member of AI received a further letter from Dianne McKaig referring to the sale of the Coca Cola Guatemala Bottling Plant to Inversiones de Centroamerica who have promised to respect trade union rights.

2 October 1980

"Dear _____,

Further to my letter, I am pleased to inform you that on Friday September 5, Embotelladora Guatemalteca S.A. (EGSA) - an independent bottling company in Guatemala City was sold to a new owner who have expressed in writing their intent to negotiate in good faith with the incumbent union at EGSA.

For several months, The Coca Cola Company had been encouraging the sale of the bottling plant with the hope that a change in ownership would lead to a resolution of the problems experienced at EGSA in the past."

Sincerely,

Dianne McKaig
Vice President
External Affairs Division

GUATEMALA

6. Further Information on UA 131/80, AMR 34/40/80 27 trade unionists - 13 August 1980

A journalist of a German monthly magazine received the following letter from Carlos Alarcon Monsanto, Guatemalan Minister of Labour, reporting that the 27 trade unionists have been released. According to our information, this statement is not true; the 27 trade unionists' detention remains unacknowledged and their whereabouts continue unknown. His report that they have been "released" can be interpreted as official recognition that the arrests were carried out, and serve as prima facie evidence of the official nature of these detentions in further actions on behalf of these prisoners. Our actions for their release and a full government accounting for them will continue.

(TRANSLATION)

3 October 1980

"I am pleased to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 31 August in which you solicit information on a group of workers belonging to the CNT.

With respect to them, I would like to inform you that the above mentioned persons were released by the courts of Justice.

I am grateful for the opportunity to act on behalf of my countrymen, and take this opportunity to sign myself"

Yours sincerely,

Carlos Alarcón Monsanto
Minister of Labour

GUATEMALA

7. UA 197/80 AMR 34/42/80 17 Trade Union Leaders - 29 August 1980

A German AI member received the following curt letter from the newly appointed Vice President of Guatemala, Coronel Oscar Mendoza Azurdia, which completely denies these detentions which were widely reported in the Guatemalan press.

(TRANSLATION)

25 September 1980

"In reply to the note you sent me, I wish to inform you what you wrote about are false happenings."

I take this opportunity to suggest to you a visit to my country so that you can prove to yourself how unfounded these reports are."

*in original: sucesos falsos

Coronel Oscar Mendoza Azurdia

HONDURAS

8. CASA Action 27 June 1980 "Massacre of Peasants on the Salvador/Honduras border"
AMR 29/28/80

in English

A Swedish AI group member received the following response/ from Colonel Diego Arturo Landa Celano, Minister of Defence denying any involvement in the Sumpul River massacre.

5 August 1980

In answer to your letter, and as Secretary of Defense, I tell you that:
The Honduran Government, National and International Institutions and other Organizations interested in knowing all the facts concerning the Border incident, had confirmed, that in no way the Honduran Armed Forces had participated in the events that had been brought to your attention.

Our Government regrets, that for reasons of no relation with our neighbouring country, this kind of information had been published and reached the international opinion with the sole purpose of affecting our image as a nation that always had respect for human rights."

Yours truly,

Colonel Diego Arturo Landa Celano
Minister of Defense

* * * * *