

**URGENT  
ACTION**

**amnesty  
international**

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

*Amnesty International opposes by all appropriate means the imposition and infliction of death penalties and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of prisoners or other detained or restricted persons whether or not they have used or advocated violence.*  
(Amnesty International Statute, Article 1(c))

EXTERNAL (for  
general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 29/02/81  
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Fear of Torture/Fear of  
Extra-judicial execution

13 January 1981

EL SALVADOR: Nelson ARRIETI  
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AI has received reports that Nelson Arrieti, a professor of film history at the University of Merida in Venezuela, was abducted by plainclothed members of the security forces at 7.00 pm on 12 January 1980 at the Alameda Hotel in San Salvador. Sr Arrieti, aged 43 and born in Venezuela, had been working as a film director in El Salvador.

AI fears that Sr Arrieti may be killed while in the hands of his abductors.

Some 8,000 Salvadorians are estimated to have died by violence during 1980; many of them are known to have been summarily executed by the security services. People have been killed because of their association, or presumed association, with peasant, labour or religious organizations, or with political parties or other organizations which do not actively support the present government. Although human rights abuses have taken place against a background of open conflict between government forces and several violent guerilla organizations, victims of torture and death at the hands of the security services have not generally been shown to have had any direct involvement in armed guerilla activities. Most of the deaths have occurred after defenceless people have been seized from their homes or places of work.

The government of El Salvador has claimed that "independent", "anti-communist" assassination squads beyond government control are responsible for these abductions and murders. However, evidence collated by AI from hundreds of individual cases proves the responsibility of the regular security services for serious violations of human rights. By continually attributing detentions, torture and killings to groups beyond government control, the government of El Salvador would seem to be seeking a means of evading accountability for the extra-legal measures carried out by its own security services.

On 3 December 1980 AI sent a message to the General Assembly of the United Nations, pointing to the overwhelming evidence that Salvadorian troops were responsible for the detention and murder of six opposition leaders, members of a coalition of opposition parties, the *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR), and urging member states to condemn the killings as actions which "defied and outraged" the minimum standards of government conduct. The message also stated that government forces had been implicated in the murders of thousands of people during 1980.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: *Limited number of appeals per UA group, please.*

Telegrams/express letters expressing concern at reports that Nelson Arrieti was abducted by members of the security forces, requesting the government to take immediate action to guarantee his physical safety, and urging his immediate release unless charged and brought before a court of law.

*A limited, but not strictly specified, number of appeals is requested; please organize a few appeals per UA group.*

APPEALS TO:

Ing. José Napoleón Duarte  
Presidente  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Colonel José Guillermo García  
Ministro de Defensa y de  
Seguridad Pública  
San Salvador, El Salvador

*(President)*

*(Minister of Defence)*

Copies to Salvadorian diplomatic representatives in your country, please.

FINAL DATE FOR ACTION: 24 February 1981

- Please take immediate action as soon as you receive this Urgent Action appeal. Carefully read the Recommended Action.
- Letters and telegrams should be brief and courteous. Stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. Refer to the relevant provisions in international law, such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:
  - Article 3, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person";
  - Article 5, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment";
  - Article 9, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile".
- The name of Amnesty International can be used unless stated otherwise; although, letters written in a private or professional capacity may be more effective.
- Information about the alleged connection of any person with an organization which is banned in their country is provided as background only and should not be included in appeals.
- In Urgent Action cases, where Amnesty International has to act rapidly to prevent the possible ill-treatment of prisoners, appeals are issued when the circumstances of a person's arrest or disappearance make such treatment likely. Do not make direct accusations and, unless otherwise instructed, do not use the word "torture".
- Send at least one telegram or express letter immediately. Other letters can be sent afterwards to the addresses listed. Copies of letters should be sent to the relevant diplomatic representatives in your country. Copies of any replies received should be sent immediately to the International Secretariat, or to your national section or Urgent Action coordinator. Thank the official who has replied, requesting that you be kept informed about the case.