

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Disappearance

11 February 1980

EL SALVADOR: Recent detentions

AI has received news of the following detentions. The whereabouts of those detained are unknown and there are fears for their physical safety.

1. Dr Fernando ESPINOZA ALTAMIRANO, medical doctor, member of (legal) *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario*, arrested in San Salvador on 8 February.
2. María Emma AGUIRRE, Oscar Reciberto GARCIA, Manuel PEÑA MARIN, Rodolfo VASQUEZ, José Eduardo VASQUEZ, Héctor CANALES, all arrested by National Guard on 3 February in Department of La Unión.
3. Students: Francisco Arnulfo VENTURA and José Humberto MEJILLA, arrested by National Guard near United States Embassy in San Salvador on 22 January.
4. Peasants : Jesús Alfaro MENJIVAR and Silencio MEJIA, detained on 20 January.

Background

Since the coup of 15 October 1979 which overthrew President Carlos Humberto Romero, AI has continued to receive allegations of illegal detentions and torture by the official security forces and by unofficial groups, although not on the same scale as under the previous government. However, arrests, disappearances and murder of suspected members of the opposition appear to have intensified in the past two weeks.

The 20,000-strong National Teachers' Association of El Salvador (ANDES) declared three-day strike from 4 February in protest at the double murder of two teachers on 31 January, reportedly by the unofficial, rightwing paramilitary group, the White Warriors' Union (*Unión Guerrera Blanca*). (It is estimated that 33 teachers were killed for political motives in 1979.)

There have been further attacks on journalists. On 8 February, the house of journalist Guillermo Galván Bonilla was machine-gunned. He is now seeking guarantees from the government for the safety of himself and his family. An engineer, Rene Marroquin, detained in San Salvador on the same day, was found dead a day later.

Catechists (lay preachers) have continued to be a principal target. On 29 January, two women catechists of the parish of Aguilares, María Urciela Martínez and Ana Quorelia Martínez were killed, allegedly by the security forces. It may be recalled that members of the Army shot dead the parish priest of Aguilares, Father Rutilio Grande, and two parishioners in March 1977.

See also "Update on El Salvador", AMR 29/19/79, 14 December 1979.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- Telegrams/express letter/letters, requesting clarification of the legal situation and whereabouts of those detained and assurances regarding their physical safety.
- *If possible*, we recommend that UA coordinators allocate the names numbered 1 to 4 for separate appeals (eg, health professionals may be asked to appeal on behalf of case 1 only; UA participants in

the educational sector may be asked to appeal on behalf of case 3 only; trade unionists may be asked to appeal on behalf of case 4).

Appeals to:

Sres Miembros de la Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno,
Palacio Nacional, San Salvador, El Salvador.

Coronel José Guillermo García,
Ministro de Defensa,
Ministerio de Defensa, San Salvador, El Salvador

In case 3 only:

Sr Comandante,
Comandancia de la Guardia Nacional,
6 Calle Oeste 2-1,
Ciudad de la Unión, Departamento de la Unión,
El Salvador

Please send copies of appeals to the Salvadorean diplomatic representative to your country, and to:

CDHES,
Avda. España 928, (unofficial human rights group)
San Salvador, El Salvador