

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 29/09/86
Distrib : CO/GR + rel SC

7 March 1986

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 8DJ
United Kingdom

EL SALVADOR "DISAPPEARANCE" OF JOSE RAUL GUERRA RAMIREZ

Amnesty International is concerned about reports that José Raúl GUERRA RAMIREZ, 38-year-old community development worker, has "disappeared" since he left his home in San Salvador on 17 January 1986. He had apparently planned to take a bus to Santa Ana, in the western part of the country, where he was in the process of starting a rural clinic for the poor. He never arrived at his destination.

In a paid advertisement, published on 29 January 1986 in the Salvadorian newspaper El Mundo, Guerra Ramirez' wife claims that her husband was detained by uniformed and plain clothes members of the Salvadorian security forces after having arrived at the western bus terminal in the capital San Salvador. Later reports indicate that soldiers of the 2a Brigada de Infanteria (Second Infantry Brigade) from Santa Ana acknowledged having detained Guerra Ramirez on 5 February 1986 but that he was released the following day. Guerra Ramirez, however, remains "disappeared".

José Raúl Guerra Ramirez has previously been detained on 6 April 1983 and was held for about eight months in La Esperanza men's prison. He was detained again on 26 February 1985 and released on 26 March 1985. The charges against him on both occasions are not known to Amnesty International. After his release in March 1985, Guerra Ramirez was reportedly warned by members of the National Police to leave El Salvador and not to return.

In December 1985, he did return to El Salvador from the USA, where he had been a para-medical student at Georgetown University, Washington D.C. He had also received a grant and taken a course in Rural Administration at the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction in the Philippines.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about José Raúl Guerra Ramirez' safety and is asking the Salvadorian authorities for an exhaustive investigation into his whereabouts and that if detained, he be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offense or released. Amnesty International is also urging that if charged, internationally recognized standards for a fair trial be adhered to and that he be allowed access to an independent lawyer of his choice.

BACKGROUND

Since President José Napoleón Duarte assumed office in June 1984, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, "disappearances", torture, death squad killings and extrajudicial executions of non-combatant civilians. Such violations, however, appear to be now taking place on a more selective basis against members of particular sectors of Salvadorian society, including trade unionists, human rights activists and those working with refugees, suspected of being in opposition to the present government or of being sympathetic to those that are. In response to expressions of international concern regarding human rights violations, a series of governments have blamed them on so-called death squads. Amnesty International has concluded that these death squads are made up of members of the Salvadorian security and military forces acting under direct orders of superior officers. In all but a few known instances, the many thousands of human rights violations which have occurred in recent years in El Salvador have gone uninvestigated and their perpetrators unpunished.

* * * * *