

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture

21 March 1980

EL SALVADOR: Detained trade unionists and peasants

1. Security forces raided the offices of the Revolutionary Trade Union Federation (*Federación Sindical Revolucionaria*) in Zona Franca, San Salvador, on 19 March and reportedly arrested some 35 trade union leaders, including:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| María CORDIANA ROSALES | Mima Elizabeth TORAN | Natividad ROSALES |
| Esperanza ARGUMEDO | Rosalina NIETO | Manuel de Jesús GOMEZ REYES |
| Recina GARAY GOMEZ | Gertrudis CHAVEZ | Araceli SANDOVAL |
| Jorge Alberto GOMEZ MONTAÑO | Carlos Alfredo MARQUEZ | |

According to AI information, some 200 people were at the union offices holding a wake for a worker who died on 17 March.

2. Alfredo CARPIO BORGES and 11 other peasants (*campesinos*) were reportedly detained by the army on 17 March in the town of Suchitoto (Department of Cuzcatlán). Six other peasants are believed to have been killed during the incident.

There is concern for the physical safety of all those detained. Since the coup of 15 October 1979 which overthrew President Carlos Humberto Romero, AI has continued to receive allegations of illegal detention and torture by the security forces in El Salvador. Arrests, disappearances and murder of suspected members of the opposition appear to have intensified since the beginning of the year, despite announcements of reform.

Background; "Update on El Salvador", AMR 29/19/79; and AI news release of 17 March, "AI says hundreds killed in El Salvador", NR 17/80, AMR 29/08/80 (over).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/express letters/letters, requesting clarification of the whereabouts and legal situation of the two groups and assurances regarding their physical safety.

IF POSSIBLE, WE HOPE UA COORDINATORS CAN ALLOCATE THE TWO CASES (TRADE UNIONISTS AND PEASANTS) SEPARATELY TO UA PARTICIPANTS FOR SEPARATE RATHER THAN COMBINED APPEALS.

Appeals to:

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

- or -

Capitán Oswaldo Marincó,
Presidente, Consejo Permanente de las Fuerzas Armadas (COPEFA)
Segunda Brigada d'Artillería,
Cuartel San Carlos, San Salvador.

(COPEFA, the Permanent Council of the Armed Forces, was set up by young military who carried out the October 1979 coup, in order to monitor political developments and to see that the Proclamation of 15 October (which announced the release of political prisoners and guaranteed human rights) is carried out.)

In case 2 only, appeals to local army commander:

Sr Jefe de la Comandancia Local,

Calle San Francisco Morazan 18, Suchitoto, Cuzcatlán, El Salvador.

Copy appeals to the Salvadorean diplomatic representatives in your country, and to the following television stations:

- Sr Ronaldo Calvo, Director CANAL 4 SA, Carretera de San Salvador a Sta Tecla, Ap. 444, San Salvador, El Salvador.
- Lic. Ricardo Mena López, CANAL 10, Final 13 Avda Sur, Ap. 4, Nueva San Salvador, El Salvador.

Text of *News Release 17/80 (AMR 29/08/80)*, 17 March 1980 (for immediate release)

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SAYS HUNDREDS KILLED IN EL SALVADOR

Amnesty International today (Monday, 17 March 1980) called on the government of El Salvador to halt a campaign of murder and abduction against peasants, launched following an announcement of agrarian reform. Hundreds of men, women and children are believed to have been killed and many more forced to flee their homes, according to reports from the country.

The international human rights organization also said it has expressed its concern to the United States government about reports of stepped-up American aid to El Salvador's internal security forces, including military advisors, coinciding with the campaign of repression. Under present conditions in El Salvador, an AI spokesman said, the nature of the aid, believed to centre on the military's police and public order operations, could be expected to lead to further violations of human rights.

The government's announcement of agrarian reform, on 9 March, was coupled with a state of siege censoring the news media, AI said. Since then, it has received reports of 80 people, including at least 28 children, killed in Cuscatlan Department alone. In Chalatenango Department, a circle of fire was lit round a village to prevent local people escaping: troops then entered the village, killing some 40 people and abducting many others, according to reports received by Amnesty International.

Troops operating in open coordination with the paramilitary organization *Orden* have shot or abducted peasants, razed villages and destroyed crops in Suchitoto and Morazan Departments, as well as Cuscatlan and Chalatenango, the organization said.

The authorities said troops were ordered to occupy plantations to be expropriated under the agrarian reform. Under these orders, AI said, they attacked villages supporting opposition peasant unions, the Christian Federation of Salvadorean Peasants (FECCAS) and the Union of Rural Workers (UTC). Land seized has been handed over to members of *Orden*, a movement organized by El Salvador's previous government to use clandestine "guerrilla-style" terror against government opponents and now re-named the *Frente Democrático Nacionalista* (Nationalist Democratic Front).

The repression has also included a bomb attack on 13 March against El Salvador's unofficial human rights commission (CDHES) and police confiscation of its documentation; death threats against Roman Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero, an outspoken critic of human rights violations; and a bomb attack on the Church's radio transmitter. The Roman Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace has been forced to dissolve, according to recent reports.

AI also said it wrote to the US Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher on 29 February, before the latest events, noting that provision of some 200,000 dollars worth of training and material by the US was followed by the deaths of scores of people in the breaking up of street demonstrations by Salvadorean authorities last November. The letter asked for official information on press reports that a much bigger US contribution, including army training teams and seven million dollars' worth of security equipment, was now proposed or under way. The reports said this aid was in response to political unrest in the country.

The military-dominated government of El Salvador took power in October 1979 replacing that of General Carlos Humberto Romero, whose position had been weakened by opposition at home and abroad to repression attributed to his government.