

**URGENT
ACTION**

**amnesty
international**

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Torture/Health Concern

23 May 1983

EL SALVADOR: Julio ROMERO TALAVERA

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Julio Romero Talavera, a pilot from Costa Rica, was arrested on 25 January 1981 and accused of violating Salvadorian airspace. He was subsequently imprisoned in La Esperanza prison in Cantón Mariona. He was removed on 27 November 1981 during an attack on the prison by the Treasury Police (see CASA 18/82, AMR 29/24/82). He was later reported to have been seen alive and to have been tortured in the *Cuartel General de la Policía de Hacienda* (Treasury Police Headquarters) (see follow-up to CASA 18/82, AMR 29/58/82).

According to a report by *Agence France Presse* on 17 May 1983, members of his family state that Julio Talavera is close to death and has lost some of his mental faculties as a result of torture, methods of which have included several mock executions. A writ of habeas corpus filed on his behalf in December 1982 has remained unacknowledged. Julio Talavera was reportedly brought before a court martial earlier this year, but Amnesty International has no indication that he has been sentenced.

Amnesty International has been following the human rights situation in El Salvador closely for a number of years, and has concluded that the security forces have been regularly involved in a systematic and widespread program of torture, "disappearance", and individual and mass killings of men, women and children. The victims have included not only people suspected of opposition to the authorities, but thousands who were simply resident in areas targeted for security operations, whose murder or mutilation seems to have been completely arbitrary. Victims of arbitrary detention, "disappearance" and murder have included priests, trade unionists, church workers, politicians, teachers, academics, peasant families, community workers, medical personnel, patients abducted from their sickbeds or murdered in hospital by security agents, human rights activists and people working with refugee or relief organizations.

There are currently over 700 acknowledged political prisoners in El Salvador. Reports indicate, however, that many more are detained without being acknowledged by the authorities. They either "disappear" or are released shortly after their arrest.

Amnesty International has also received reports of cramped prison conditions, inadequate diet and constant beatings and insults of the prisoners by their guards. A number of prisoners also allege that they have been tortured while in custody, allegations that were described by the then-Minister of Justice as "absurd" and "tendentious", motivated by "mental perversion" and "political fanaticism".

.../...

Amnesty International is an independent worldwide movement working for the international protection of human rights. It seeks the release of men and women detained anywhere because of their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religious creed, provided they have not used or advocated violence. These are termed *prisoners of conscience*. It works for fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners and works on behalf of such people detained without charge or trial. It opposes the death penalty and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of all prisoners without reservation.

On 23 March 1982, 400 prisoners in La Esperanza prison and in the women's prison of Ilopango went on hunger strike. Among the demands of the hunger strikers was the return to La Esperanza of Julio Talavera and Manuel Terrero Sanchez, who was also removed from prison by the Treasury Police. Prisoners allege that raids on the prisons have taken place on other occasions.

For further information on the situation of political prisoners, see AMR 29/48/82, "Political Prisoners in El Salvador".

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Telegrams/express letters/airmail letters expressing serious concern at reports of the ill-health of Julio Romero Talavera, allegedly as a result of torture while in unacknowledged detention. Request clarification of his legal situation following his appearance before a court martial, and seek assurances that he will be given any necessary medical treatment.

APPEALS TO:

S.E. don Alvaro Magaña Borja
Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams to: *Presidente Magaña Borja,*
San Salvador, El Salvador

Dr. Napoleón Eugenio Cárdenas
Ministro de Salud Pública y Bienestar
Social
Ministerio de Salud Pública y Bienestar
Social
Calle Arce 827, San Salvador, El Salvador

(Minister of Health)

Telegrams to: *Ministro Salud Pública*
Cardenas, San Salvador, El Salvador

General Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova
Ministro de Defensa y Seguridad Pública
Ministerio de Defensa y Seguridad
Pública

Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Minister of Defence)

Telegrams to: *Ministro Defensa*
Vides Casanova, San Salvador,
El Salvador

COPIES TO:

Sr. Director
Policia de Hacienda
Calle Concepción
San Salvador, El Salvador
(Head of Treasury Police)

Dr. Arturo Zeledón Castrillo
Presidente de la Corte Suprema
de Justicia
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

(President of Supreme Court
of Justice)

- Please take action as soon as you receive this Urgent Action appeal. Carefully read the recommended action. If possible, send a telegram or express letter immediately to one or more of the addresses given. Other letters can be sent afterwards.
- Telegrams and letters should be brief and courteous. Stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. Refer to 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 may be used, although letters written in a private or personal capacity are often more effective.
- Copies of appeals should be sent to relevant diplomatic representatives in your country.
- In Urgent Action cases, Amnesty International has to act rapidly to prevent the ill-treatment of prisoners. An appeal is issued when Amnesty International believes it has received reliable and accurate information in such cases. It is not always possible to verify all details independently and in some instances the situation outlined in the appeal may change. Urgent Action participants are always notified of any significant new information.
- Copies of any replies received from government authorities should be sent immediately to your national section Urgent Action coordinator or direct to the International Secretariat. If appropriate, thank the official who has replied and ask to be kept informed about the case.

* Lic. Fernando Volio Jimenez
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
San José, Costa Rica
(Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de
El Salvador (CDHES)
Av. las Américas y Calle San José
Urb. Isidro Menéndez Edif. ACUS
San Salvador, El Salvador
(human rights commission)

CDHES *(governmental human rights commission)*
Dr. Benjamin Custoni
2a Planta
Fiscalía General de la República
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador in your country.

Please try to organize some appeals from MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Check with the
International Secretariat if sending appeals after 23 June 1983.

* *It is alleged that Costa Rica has not taken any steps to investigate reports that Julio Talavera has been subjected to torture and detention without trial.*