

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 402/93 Apparent political killings / fear for safety

12 November 1993

EL SALVADOR Manuel de Jesús Acevedo, aged 29
Remberto Antonio López, aged 19

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the killing of a member of the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)*, (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front), the former armed opposition group which recently became a political party. His body was found next to that of Remberto Antonio López, whose political affiliation remains unknown.

Manuel de Jesús Acevedo was a former combatant of the FMLN from Soyapango, San Salvador, and husband of Doris Elena Hernández, FMLN Electoral Affairs Secretary. He and Remberto Antonio López were found shot dead in a rubbish dump in Colonia Las Margaritas, Soyapango. On 8 November, people from the neighbourhood found them with their hands tied behind their backs with barbed wire and with clear signs of torture.

The bodies were examined by a Justice of Peace and the Instituto de Medicina Legal, the government's Institute for Legal Medicine. Initial police investigations confirmed that both had been shot twice in the head. Both men had been missing since 6 November and appeared to have been killed that same day.

These killings come days after the murder of four FMLN leaders and members (see UA 385/93, AMR 29/18/93, 1 November and UA 377/93, AMR 29/17/93, 26 October). They further increase Amnesty International's fear for the safety of members of the FMLN and other opposition parties in the run-up to the presidential and legislative elections to be held in March 1994.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These killings are the latest in a series against members of the FMLN and of its electoral ally, the *Convergencia Democrática (CD)*, since the electoral campaign began. Most cases remain unresolved as thorough investigations have not been carried out. Nevertheless, the pattern of killings seems to implicate government forces or agents linked to them. As the electoral campaign intensifies, so too has the climate of threats and intimidations against opposition figures.

The FMLN became a political party earlier this year under the terms of the 1992 Peace Accords which ended the country's 12-year-old armed conflict. The Accords included commitments and reforms aimed at protecting human rights and putting an end to the massive violation of human rights which characterized the war period. However, many of these reforms have yet to be implemented. Meanwhile, an amnesty law passed earlier this year has meant that those who committed abuses in the past remain free.

Amnesty International believes that the spate of recent killings and threats could be evidence of continued activity by the so-called "death squads". During the war, these clandestine groups or individuals, inextricably linked to state structures, systematically carried out killings and "disappearances" of suspected FMLN members. The Truth Commission, appointed last year by the United Nations to investigate past human rights abuses in El Salvador, highlighted the urgent need for a special enquiry into the activities of the "death squads" because of the threat that these still posed to post-war society. Although there have been substantial reforms to the armed forces, no enquiry into "death squad" structures has been carried out and other recommendations made by the Truth Commission have so far been ignored.

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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.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the killing of Manuel de Jesús Acevedo, Remberto Antonio López, particularly in view of several other recent killings of FMLN leaders and members.
- requesting that an immediate investigation be carried out into these killings and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to do all that is in their power to guarantee the safety of members of opposition parties in the months leading to the March 1994 elections;
- calling on the government to comply with the human rights commitments it made in the Peace Accords, by opening a thorough investigation into alleged "death squad" killings and bringing to justice those responsible, so as to send a clear message that human rights violations will no longer be tolerated.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Presidency

Dr. Oscar Alfredo Santamaría
Ministro de la Presidencia
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Ministro Presidencia, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: + 503 22 9109

Telexes: 30344 RS SAL

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

2) Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr. José Manuel Pacas Castro
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Boulevard Manuel Enrique Araujo Km. 6
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: + 503 98 0334/98 0314

Telexes: 20179 RREE SAL

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights

Dr. Carlos Molina Fonseca
Procurador para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
9ª Avda. Norte y 5ª Calle Pte.
Edificio AMSA, N° 535
San Salvador, El Salvador
Faxes: + 503 71 2886

2) Farabundo Martí Liberation Front

Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)
Secretaría de Derechos Humanos
calle Gabriela Mistral #209
San Salvador, El Salvador

3) Diario Latino

6ª Avda. Norte 325
San Salvador, El Salvador
Faxes: + 503 71 0971

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 December 1993.

- Please take action as soon as you receive this Urgent Action appeal. Carefully read the recommended actions. If possible, send a telegram, telex, fax 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 may be more effective.
- Copies of appeals should be sent to relevant diplomatic representatives in your country.
- In Urgent Actions cases, Amnesty International has to act rapidly on behalf of victims of grave human rights violations. 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 facts.
- Copies of any replies received from government authorities should be sent immediately to your section's Urgent Action coordinator or direct to the Campaign and Membership Department of the International Secretariat. If appropriate, thank the official who has replied and ask to be kept informed about the case.