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EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 15/84 (AMR 29/06/84 23 January, AMR 29/10/84 23 February) - Fear of Torture/Legal concern

EL SALVADOR: Fourteen trade unionists

Amnesty International has learned that Juan Salvador RAMOS HERNANDEZ, who was detained on 19 January 1984 by members of the Salvadorian security forces is still in detention, together with the following eight people whose names were already known to Amnesty International:

José Jeremías PEREIRA
Salvador CHAVEZ
Oscar Armando BENAVIDES
Juan José VARGAS LEMUS

Dinora RAMIREZ DE PEREIRA
César Alvaro ESCALANTE
Estéban GONZALEZ
Amanda RAMOS DE VILLEGAS

The men are held in La Nueva Esperanza prison, Mariona, the main men's prison, and the women are held at Ilopango Women's Prison.

According to new information and testimony made available to Amnesty International, 86 people were present at the meeting on 19 January 1984 when the original fourteen trade unionists were arrested. The meeting had been called by the *Federación Sindical Revolucionaria* (FSR), Revolutionary trade Union Federation, to elect a new executive committee, but not all those present at the meeting were members of the FSR. The National Police are reported to have arrived as the meeting was about to start; they photographed and took details of all the people present. Fourteen people were subsequently taken to the headquarters of the National Police in San Salvador where they were held blindfolded for eight days. According to reports, some of them were pressurized by both physical and psychological means to confess that they were members of *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación* (FPL), Popular Liberation Forces. Two of those released were not members of the FSR, but three others were members of the board. The nine that remained in detention were told that they were to appear on a video which would be shown on television in which they would confess that they had participated in terrorist activity.

Further recommended action:

Please continue to send letters:

- expressing concern about the detention of these nine people and requesting clarification of the reasons for their arrest
- expressing concern about reports that some of those detained were tortured during the initial period of their detention and urge that those still in detention be humanely treated
- seeking clarification of their legal situation and urge that they be released unless formally charged and brought before a court

Appeals should be sent to:

S.E. Dr Alvaro A. Magaña Borja
Presidente de la República de El Salvador

Coronel Carlos Reynaldo López Nuila
Director General de la Policía Nacional

Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

6a Calle Oriente
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Director of National Police)

Don Manuel Isidoro López Sermeno
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Palacio Nacional
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Minister of the Interior)

Copies of appeals may be sent to Salvadorian diplomatic representatives in your country.

Check with the International Secretariat if sending appeals after 14 June 1984.

Attached for your information is:

- a letter addressed to the Congress of the United States of America from María Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar, a Mexican citizen, who was also arrested on 19 January 1984 but who was released three days later when she was allowed to return to Mexico;

To the Congress men of the United States of America,
White House,
Washington D.C.

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you to let you know about some of the things I saw in El Salvador concerning Human Rights.

My name is María Raquel Gutiérrez; I am a Mexican student who went to El Salvador to take a solidarity message from Mexico to the 5th Ordinary Federal Congress of the Federación Sindical Revolucionaria.

I arrived in San Salvador on January 18th and was arrested, without a warrant, on January 19th. I had not been in El Salvador 24 hours. I should emphasise that I didn't know what was the charge against me, nor, where I was being taken. Another 14 people who were going to take part in the Congress were arrested too.

I found out that I was in the Cuartel General de la Policía Nacional but I was denied any possibility of contacting anyone. I spent more than three days there without being allowed to lie down and I was kept blindfolded with a piece of dirty cloth. I was interrogated continuously, particularly during the nights. Although I was not tortured physically, I think the psychological torture they used is as bad. By psychological torture I mean threats, lies, and attempts to force me into making false confessions. These threats were shouted at me whilst I was blindfolded. At the same time I kept hearing the noise made by some plastic objects which were used to hit other prisoners. I could also hear the screams of people being tortured. These screams lasted continuously throughout the three days I was there, and prevented me relaxing.

As I left the prison I saw people who were being kept in the worst imaginable conditions of hygiene, without any decent food and packed into tiny cells. I estimate that between 15 and 20 people were packed into each 2 x 3 metre cell.

I am sure that people who endure these conditions for long periods must suffer serious mental and physical damage. I can say this from my own experience. After spending three days there, I have problems sleeping, concentrating when working or studying, and walking, because my feet were badly injured and swollen from sitting all the time.

I know little about law, but I am sure that what happened to me and the other fourteen people, and what is happening to other prisoners at the Cuartel General de la Policía Nacional in San Salvador has nothing to do with Human Rights. It is unthinkable that these evil men have such power to decide what happens to you without being given any chance to ask or say something.

As I write this letter nine of the trade unionists who were arrested with me remain prisoners. Their names are –

José Jeremías Pereyra Amaya
Salvador Escalante Chavez
Cruz Alfaro Escalante
Dinora Ramírez de Pereyra
Juan Salvador Ramos Hernández
Estéban González Pérez
Oscar Armando Benavides Vila
Juan José Vargas Lemus
Amanda Ramos de Villegas

I thank you for Reading this letter, and hope you do everything you can to stop what the armed forces in El Salvador are doing, and to improve Human Rights in that country.

Yours gratefully,
María Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar