

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture/Unacknowledged detention/Health

15 September 1988

EL SALVADOR: Arrests of university staff and students and of trade unionists on 13 September 1988

David URRUTIA. Student representative to the *Consejo Directivo* (Governing Council) of the *Centro Universitario de Occidente* (Western University Division) of the *Universidad de El Salvador* (UES), National University of El Salvador.

Lic. Rafael CARTAGENA. Interim Director of the *Centro Universitario de Occidente*.

Lic. Wilfredo MARTINEZ. Professor in the Languages Department of the *Centro Universitario de Occidente*.

David AGUEDA. Humanities student and president of the *Sociedad de Letras* (Humanities Society) at the *Centro Universitario de Occidente*.

Lic. Wilfredo BARILLAS, Vice-Rector of the UES.

Roberto CAMPOS. Agronomy student at the UES and member of the *Union Nacional de Trabajadores Salvadorenos* (UNTS), National Union of Salvadorian Trade Unionists.

Otoniel GUEVARA, his wife Laura MIRA, both UNTS members and their one and a half-year-old daughter Mitzi GUEVARA.

Humberto CENTENO, Julio PORTILLO and Jorge MORALES, members of the Executive Committee of the UNTS.

Amnesty International has received reports of the detention on 13 September 1988 of the above-named people in the context of demonstrations advocating an increase in the budget for the UES. It is not known if their detentions have been acknowledged nor where they are being held.

David URRUTIA, Lic. Rafael CARTAGENA and Lic. Wilfredo MARTINEZ were detained by members of the National Police during demonstrations by staff and students from the Western University Division in the city of Santa Ana. According to witnesses, some 40 persons were taken into custody, but only the above three names have been reported thus far. Witnesses also report that the police use undue force in dealing with the demonstrators and that some 18 members of the university community were injured when police fired on the demonstrators. Among those reported to have been most seriously wounded was David AGUEDA. His present whereabouts are unknown.

Demonstrations by staff and students at the San Salvador division of the UES on the same day also led to the arrest of a reported 300 demonstrators and some foreign observers. Witnesses say that up to 100 others may have been injured during the incident, some having been clubbed by soldiers, others apparently shot when soldiers fired on the demonstrators. Lic. Wilfredo BARILLAS was reportedly among the wounded. It has also been alleged that the armed forces interfered with efforts by the local Red Cross to transport the wounded to first aid centres.

Roberto CAMPOS, Otoniel GUEVARA, Laura MIRA and Mitzi GUEVARA were reportedly seized when uniformed men raided the *Jardin Infantil Australiano* (Australian children's nursery) in the San Miguelito district of San Salvador at 2 am on 13 September 1988. The childcare centre is run by the women's committee of the independent *Federacion Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadorenos* (FENASTRAS), National Federation of Salvadorian Workers. It has variously been

reported that they were detained by soldiers of the San Carlos barracks in San Salvador or by members of the Treasury Police.

Humberto CENTENO, Julio PORTILLO and Jorge MORALES were arrested after soldiers reportedly encircled the UNTS headquarters while sharpshooters took up position in surrounding buildings. Humberto CENTENO, who is also the Secretary General of the Salvadorian Telecommunications union ASSTEL, and Julio PORTILLO have been subjected to previous short-term arrests. CENTENO was last the subject of an Amnesty International action in March 1988, when he was subjected to short-term arrest and there were fears for his physical integrity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Both the UES and the independent trade union movement in El Salvador have long been characterized by the government as "subversive" and there have been numerous incidents of human rights violations including arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution directed at members of both sectors (see for example AI Index AMR 29/06/86, 'human Rights Violations directed against Trade Unionists in El Salvador'). Although the Salvadorian Code of Penal Procedure is now formally in force, limiting administrative detention to 72 hours, detainees and human rights monitoring organizations continue to report that suspects are held incommunicado for extended periods in military and security force detention centres, which Amnesty International believes facilitates human rights violations such as torture and "disappearances". Amnesty International is therefore concerned for the physical integrity of all those detained during the current disturbances.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported detention of all the people mentioned above and asking that their whereabouts be made known and that they be treated humanely while in custody;
- asking that they be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or else released;
- asking for enquiries into the allegations that the Salvadorian army used undue force in dealing with the current demonstrations and for assurances that all those wounded are being offered adequate care. Ask particularly for assurances concerning the state of health of Lic. Wilfredo BARILLAS and David AGUEDA and for assurances that David AGUEDA is being treated for the serious wounds that he allegedly suffered during the 13 September demonstration.

WITH RESPECT TO THE BABY: ask for immediate assurances as to her well-being, and for information as to the arrangements which have been made for her care while her parents are in custody.

APPEALS TO:

S.E. José Napoleón Duarte
Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Presidente Duarte,
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telexes: 20245 res sal;
20445 cgfa sal; 20522

General Adolfo Onecifero Blandón
Jefe del Estado Mayor Conjunto de la Fuerza
Armada
Calle Concepción
Final Pasaje Merazo
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Army Chief-of-Staff)
Telegrams: Jefe Estado Mayor
Conjunto Fuerza Armada,
San Salvador, El Salvador

Cnel. Dionisio Ismael Machuca
Director General de la Policía de Hacienda
Calle Concepción

(Director of Treasury Police)
Telegrams: Director General,
Policía Hernandez

San Salvador, El Salvador

San Salvador, El Salvador

COPIES TO:

Lic. José Luis Argueta Antillon
Rector
Universidad de El Salvador
San Salvador, El Salvador
(Rector of the UES)

Señores
17 Calle Oriente No. 121
San Miguelito
San Salvador, El Salvador
(trade union)

Señores
Cruz Roja Salvadoreña
17 C P y 7 Av. N.
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador
(Salvadorian Red Cross)

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador in your country.

PLEASE ORGANIZE APPEALS FROM RELEVANT TARGET SECTORS

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 October 1988.