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Fear of "Disappearance"

8 September 1989

EL SALVADOR: Juan Francisco MASIN CHAVEZ  
Sara Cristina CHAN CHEIN  
Francisco Javier ACOSTA GONZALEZ

Amnesty International has learned of the reported detention and subsequent "disappearance" of the above-mentioned people.

Juan Francisco Masín Chávez, a 26-year-old worker and union member at the Lido factory in Soyapango, was reportedly detained at 6.30pm on 19 August 1989 in the Colonia San Roche in Soyapango by armed and uniformed members of the Air Force. However, the Air Force has repeatedly denied his detention. Juan Masín is also a part-time student at the National university of El Salvador.

Sara Cristina Chan Chein, a journalist and member of the *Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños* (FENASTRAS), the National trade Union Federation of Salvadorian Workers, was also reportedly detained on 19 August by members of the Air Force. Her detention was acknowledged by the Air Force, who claimed that she had subsequently been handed over to the *Policía de Hacienda*, the Treasury Police. However, the *Policía de Hacienda* have denied holding her. According to neighbours, her house has been under constant surveillance by the military since the day of her detention.

Francisco Javier Acosta González, a 27-year-old market vendor, was reportedly abducted at 12.30pm on 17 August 1989 at the market in Soyapango. According to witnesses, he was taken away by armed men in civilian clothing driving a blue minibus with tinted windows. His detention has not been acknowledged and his whereabouts are still unknown.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety, since the circumstances of their unacknowledged detention are consistent with the pattern of "disappearances" in recent years.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International continues to receive numerous reports of unacknowledged detention and "disappearance" in El Salvador. Over 40 cases of forced "disappearance" have been reported to Amnesty International since 1 June 1989, when the government of Alfredo Cristiani took office.

Many of these arrests and "disappearances" have been carried out by members of the security forces, often in civilian clothing or operating under the guise of the so-called "death squads". Trade union activists have been particular targets of "disappearances" and other human rights violations, including detention without trial, threats and harassment.

In April 1989, 73 people were arrested and detained following raids by security forces on the offices of various popular organizations, including those of the *Federacion Unitaria Sindical Salvadoreña*, the Salvadorian Trade Union Federation. On 5 September 1989, uniformed members of the *Policía Nacional* were reported to have attacked the offices of FENASTRAS, which has been encircled and under constant surveillance by the police for two weeks. No injuries or detentions have been reported.

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

- expressing concern at the reported unacknowledged detention of Juan Francisco Masín Chávez, Sara Cristina Chan Chein and Francisco Javier Acosta González and asking for an immediate investigation to establish their whereabouts;

- seeking assurance that their physical safety be guaranteed while in detention and that they be allowed to be visited by their relatives and lawyers;

- asking that, if detained, they be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or else released.

APPEALS TO:

S.E. Alfredo Cristiani  
Presidente de la República de El Salvador  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Presidente Cristiani  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
Telexes: 20245 RS SAL; 20522

Senor Comandante  
Jefe de la Fuerza Aérea Salvadoreña  
Ilopango  
San Salvador, El Salvador

General Rafael Humberto Larios  
Ministro de Defensa y de Seguridad Pública  
Ministerio de Defensa y de Seguridad Pública  
Doble Vía a Santa Tecla  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa y de Seguridad  
Pública, San Salvador, El Salvador  
Telexes: 20446 MINDEF; 20624 COPREFA

Telegrams: Jefe Fuerza Aérea,  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
Telexes: 20347

COPIES TO:

Lic. Benjamin Cestoni  
Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El  
Salvador, gubernamental (CDH),  
Paseo Gral Escalón  
87 Av. Sur, Bloque 2 No. 226  
Col. Escalón  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
(governmental human rights commission)

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El  
Salvador, no-gubernamental (CDHES),  
Urbanización La Esperanza  
Pasaje 1, No 117  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
(non-governmental human rights  
commission)

Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores  
Salvadoreños (FENASTRAS)  
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San Salvador, El Salvador

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Please check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 October 1989.