



CENTRAL AMERICA SPECIAL ACTION (CASA)

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EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 29/24/82
Distrib: CO/AD + relevant NS

E L S A L V A D O R

18 April 1982

CASA 18/82: Manuel Enrique TERRENO SANCHEZ
Julio TALAVERA

Antonio MORALES CARBONELL
Héctor Bernabé RECINOS

Manuel Enrique Terreno Sánchez and Julio Talavera, both prisoners in La Nueva Esperanza prison at Mariona, have been removed from the prison and are now being held in incommunicado detention in an unknown place. It is believed that they are being held by the security services. Amnesty International fears that they may be tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in incommunicado detention and that they may "disappear". Amnesty International does not yet have individual details on these two prisoners but believes they may be among the many political prisoners held in Mariona prison.

Amnesty International has received reports that at 8:30 am on 18 March 1982, 17 trucks of members of the National Guard and the Treasury Police (Policía de Hacienda) raided Mariona prison. At 1 pm, after the security forces withdrew, relatives of the prisoners reportedly confirmed that many of them had been tortured; some had had their hands burned and cords tied to their testicles. Amnesty International has received the names of two of those who were severely tortured, Antonio Morales Carbonell and Héctor Bernabé Recinos. Antonio Morales Carbonell, aged 23, secretary general of the guerrilla organization Frente Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Front) and son of junta member Dr José Antonio Morales Ehrlich, had the veins of his wrists cut and was severely injured on the left side of his thorax. He was subsequently transferred to a medical clinic in San Salvador in order to receive medical treatment for the injuries he had sustained under torture. Héctor Bernabé Recinos, secretary general of FENASTRAS, Federación Nacional de Sindicatos de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (National Federation of Salvadorian Workers' Unions), was reportedly immobilized following the tortures he received. He had been arrested on 22 August 1980 together with almost the entire leadership of the STECEL union, Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Electricidad de la Central Eléctrica del Río Lempa (Union of Electricity Workers at the Rio Lempa power station), following a 24 hour strike to protest at dangerous working conditions.

On 23 March 1982, 400 prisoners in Mariona prison and in the women's prison at Ilopango went on hunger-strike. Among the demands of the hunger-strikers were the return to Mariona prison of Manuel Enrique Terreno Sánchez and Julio Talavera and an end to attacks on the prisoners by the security forces.

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Political prisoners in El Salvador

In all, AI believes that there are now several hundreds of political prisoners currently held at a number of prisons including Santa Tecla, La Nueva Esperanza at Mariona in the jurisdiction of Mejicanos, and the women's prison at Ilopango. Conditions are cramped according to eye witness reports; the prison authorities provide an inadequate diet, but prisoners' relatives are permitted to supplement the official rations. Family visits are permitted once a week. Prisoners allege that they have been tortured in custody. Methods described include the use of sulphuric acid, electric shocks, beatings and mock executions. Prisoners are also transferred without warning between Santa Tecla and Mariona prison. Many of those housed in these three prisons are believed by Amnesty International to be political prisoners.

The political prisoners in these three prisons have initiated a number of hunger strikes to protest at conditions within the prisons. In September 1980, Amnesty International received reports that four prisoners were removed from Santa Tecla in apparent reprisal for having participated in a hunger strike calling for a general amnesty and an end to human rights violations; those removed have not been heard of since. On 3 June 1981, prisoners at Santa Tecla protested that members of the security forces armed with G-3 rifles and protected by bullet-proof vests and gas masks searched Santa Tecla prison, harassed the prisoners and threatened them they would be shot if they did not cooperate. The security agents also reportedly robbed the prison inmates in an apparent reprisal against those who had spoken to the foreign press. In August 1981 a hunger-strike was begun in protest at the fact that following a visit to the Santa Tecla prison in the previous month by a European Parliament delegation, a number of prisoners' families received death threats, and one of the relatives, Etevelina Cristales Flores was killed. The threats and the killing were believed to be in reprisal for the denunciations which the prisoners had given to the delegation of conditions in the prison, and the general human rights situation in El Salvador. The August hunger-strike was also to protest that the prisoners were being held without trial; some were awaiting trial for over a year by that time.

Background information

Human rights violations on a massive scale in El Salvador continue to be brought to the attention of Amnesty International. Amnesty International is aware that these violations of human rights have occurred at a time of civil conflict between guerrilla groups and the Salvadorian authorities. However, there is a systematic pattern of human rights violations, including torture, "disappearance" and cold-blooded murder being carried out by the Salvadorian security forces, and directed against people not involved in guerrilla activities. Testimonies received by Amnesty International implicate all branches of the Salvadorian security forces in gross abuses of human rights.

Recommended Action

Letters to Salvadorian embassies asking for information on the whereabouts of Manuel Terreno Sánchez and Julio Talavera and requesting guarantees for their safety, and also asking for information concerning the physical state of Antonio Morales Carbonell and Héctor Bernabé Recinos and calling for adequate health care for them. Ask the embassy to convey your requests to the appropriate authority in El Salvador. We are suggesting that appeals be directed to the embassies as the situation in El Salvador is very uncertain following the Salvadorian elections on 28 March.