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EL SALVADOR : HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DIRECTED AGAINST REPATRIATED REFUGEES AND THE DISPLACED, AND AGAINST CHURCH, RELIEF AND REFUGEE WORKERS ASSISTING THEM.

For several years, Amnesty International has been concerned that repatriated refugees and the displaced, as well as church, relief and refugee workers assisting them, have been specific targets of human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, torture, detention without trial, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution.

I. REPATRIATED REFUGEES

"I returned to El Salvador because I felt safe. I knew there was repression but as I was not involved, I thought I'd be safe. Many of us who were refugees are now prisoners because someone pointed the finger at us. Just for having been refugees, we are immediately suspect." (1)

"There are many spies in the neighbourhood who make 100 Colones for every person they turn in, whether they are involved in anything or not." (2)

In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, thousands of Salvadorians fled political violence in their country. Many sought safety in neighbouring Honduras. When they agreed to be voluntarily repatriated to El Salvador several years later, they found themselves facing not only economic hardship but also arbitrary arrest, torture and other human rights violations of concern to Amnesty International. The Salvadorian authorities have long alleged that the refugee camps in Honduras have served as "safe havens" for Salvadorian guerrillas and have thus been anxious to detain and interrogate returned refugees, often under torture, in an effort to question them about these suspicions as well as about their alleged links to the armed opposition prior to fleeing their country.

Appendix 1 contains an alphabetical list of 22 cases of former and current political prisoners and one case of "disappearance". All those named are former refugees who were arrested after they returned from exile in

(1)+ (2) Statements by refugees repatriated in 1984 from the Mesa Grande refugee camp for Salvadorian refugees. The camp is located some 50 kilometres from the Salvadorian border, in the Honduran department of Ocotepeque.

Honduras. Most of them lived in the Mesa Grande refugee camp, where they were officially recognized as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Analysis of testimonies obtained by Amnesty International, some of which are partially reproduced in Appendices 2 - 5 of this document, indicates that the interrogation of detainees focussed on their experiences and acquaintances while they were refugees in Honduras, rather than on their activities since their return to the country. It also substantiates reports of torture during interrogation of political suspects at various detention centres throughout the country.

A number of other voluntarily repatriated refugees from Honduras are also known to have been held in security or police custody for up to 15 days and then released without charge. Such was the case of Julio Guardado and his children Melany and Cresencio, aged about 28 and 18 respectively. They were repatriated in 1984. They were detained by the National Police in July 1986 and released 15 days later.

II. THE DISPLACED

The estimated 500,000 desplazados (displaced) or "internal refugees" amount to some 10 per cent of the country's population. They became displaced when they fled their places of origin, often following indiscriminate army attacks upon the civilian population in their area. These attacks have



San José Calle Real camp for the displaced, north of the capital San Salvador, the only remaining camp under direct Catholic church responsibility. It houses between 700 and 1,000 displaced who are "in transit".

taken place in the context of El Salvador's seven year civil strife, during which the Salvadorian military have pursued a counter-insurgency strategy aimed at forcibly removing the civilian population in areas of conflict, fearing that they offered potential logistical support for the armed opposition.

Recently, the issue of the displaced has become highly politicized. In 1986, various groups of desplazados began expressing the wish to return to their homes, even though these may be in areas of conflict. They stated that they preferred risking their lives to remaining in camps for the displaced where they are unable to support themselves.

Meanwhile, the government has announced its own resettlement plan called "Unidos para Reconstruir" (United to Reconstruct). Its critics charge that the plan, funded by USAID (US Agency for International Development), is an attempt to repopulate guerrilla-cleared territory with pro-government civilians. The government contends that opposition groups have themselves attempted to repopulate conflict areas with their own supporters, claiming that when the army initiates operations in such areas, the opposition can then generate international protests by charging that innocent civilians are being attacked. The Salvadorian church has distanced itself from both plans, expressing its belief that everybody should be allowed to return to their place of origin. The church itself has participated in projects involving the repopulation of areas with the army's permission.

In the context of this highly politicised debate concerning the various resettlement plans, a number of incidents involving displaced persons of concern to Amnesty International have been reported. In one incident on 3 November 1986, seven villagers from San José Las Flores, Chalatenango, (a village which was repopulated in June 1986 by the Comisión Nacional de Repoblación -CNR- National Commission for Repopulation, a private organization which attempts to resettle the displaced) were arrested by soldiers of the 1st Infantry Brigade and released several days later. The arrests took place after children from San José Las Flores were reported to have been taken to the village school by the local army commander and asked to identify voices on tape recordings confiscated by the authorities in September 1986 from three foreign journalists who had been arrested in the area and who were subsequently advised to leave the country. The confiscated material was not returned to them. According to the journalists, their tapes contained testimonies by the villagers about their life in the contested war zone and about their attempts to reconstruct their village. It was also alleged that the children, after having been made to identify voices on the tape, were filmed on video, as were the villagers who had been gathered in the main square. Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas of San Salvador expressed concern about the incident in his Sunday homily on 9 November 1986, but the local army commander denied reports that the arrests were made after the children identified voices on the journalists' tapes.

III. CHURCH, RELIEF AND REFUGEE WORKERS

Distribution of relief funds from abroad has also become a highly politicized issue in El Salvador. Catholic and protestant church workers have alleged that the Salvadorian government and USAID officials have attempted to control their aid programs as a means of ensuring that such aid monies are used in furtherance of government military and civilian counter-insurgency program aims. The authorities have denied the

allegations. Meanwhile, government information campaigns have been conducted against agencies and individuals involved in independent relief operations, and human rights violations have been directed against their staff in apparent efforts to disrupt and discredit their work. Incidents of this nature reported during 1985 and early 1986 include:

The arrest on 22 January 1985 of Emeteria Acosta de Peraza, who served as a liaison between the San Roque refuge for the displaced and the Archdiocese of San Salvador. Security forces had gone looking for her 2 days earlier at the refuge. She was released on 1 February 1985.

The arrest on 16 March 1985 of José Miro González Castro, worker with the Archbishopric's program for the displaced, at the door of the Sacred Heart Basilica by men in plain clothes. He was held "under investigation" by the National Police and was released four days later.

The arrest on 30 August 1985 of Jorge Pozuelo Utrilla, a Spanish lay missionary, by members of the National Police after leaving work at the Social Secretariat of the Archbishopric. He was released on 3 September. Nine months later, he was among the five staff members of the Social Secretariat who received death threats (see below). Jorge Pozuelo had previously been working in the refugee camps in Honduras.

The arrest on 26 February 1986 of Carlos Armando Arce, a student working with a church-run medical centre for displaced in La Libertad. He was released on 7 March.

The arrest on 24 March 1986 of Alina Betsabé Domínguez, a social worker with the Social Secretariat of the Archbishopric. She was released on 2 April.

Between 26 and 29 May, seven human rights workers were arrested by plain clothes members of the Treasury Police. In sworn statements to both local human rights groups and international delegations, they declared that they had been subjected to psychological and physical torture and that they were made to sign "confessions" without being allowed to read them. All were subsequently released. These arrests and the large-scale public information campaign directed against those arrested were widely interpreted as stemming from a government desire to cast doubt on the origin and destination of local and foreign funding being administered by these agencies.

As reported in previous Amnesty International documents (see Allegations of Torture of Human Rights Workers, AMR 29/59/86 of 24 October 1986) the accusations against the arrested human rights workers stemmed from allegations made on 30 May 1986 by Luz Janete Alfaro Peña (also known as Michele Salinas), former member of the non-governmental Human Rights Commission, during a press conference held at the Treasury Police Headquarters in San Salvador. She herself had been taken into custody by the Treasury Police on 20 May 1986. At the press conference, she declared that she had voluntarily placed herself in their custody in order to denounce infiltration of the human rights groups by the armed opposition. She charged that Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, among others, was aware that food and money from international aid agencies such as Oxfam and the Ford Foundation, destined for the displaced, was being channelled to the guerrillas by local human rights groups. However, in his 8 June homily, the Archbishop stated that "recent declarations casting grave doubts over

the church's humanitarian work were scandalous and sensationalist."

A month after the arrests of the human rights workers, on 28 June 1986, five social workers of the Roman Catholic Social Secretariat of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, including its director Father Octavio Cruz, received death threats by telephone. The same week-end, several doctors and medical workers who work with displaced people housed by the Catholic church are also reported to have received death threats.

On 30 June, 47-year-old Andrés Antonio López Gámez, relief worker with CARITAS, the church-based relief agency attached to the Archdiocese, was detained in La Libertad by members of the National Police and released on 7 July after reportedly having been beaten and threatened with reprisals against his family if he did not "talk".

On 17 November 1986, Pablo Dolores Alvarenga Escobar, employee of the Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda (FUNDASAL), a Salvadorian foundation that builds housing for people on-low-incomes, was arrested and released 4 days later.

IV. LEGAL SITUATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

The political prisoners referred to in Appendix I of this document were detained while Decree 50 of February 1984 was in force. It governed penal proceedings against people accused of offences against the State, while constitutional guarantees were suspended under the State of Siege. Under the decree, detainees could be held incommunicado for up to 15 days. It was during this period - before their detentions were officially acknowledged and before detainees were placed under the jurisdiction of the special military tribunals established by Decree 50 - that torture was most frequently reported. According to detailed testimony obtained by Amnesty International, prisoners were subjected to both physical and mental torture and ill-treatment to press them to sign extrajudicial statements (1) which they had often not read, and sometimes sign while blindfolded.

Amnesty International has also been concerned that detainees were not dealt with within the time limits established by Decree 50, and that an estimated 90 per cent of political prisoners have been in untried detention for four or five years. As far as the organization is aware, none of the political prisoners referred to in Appendix I have been brought to trial.

Due to a politically-motivated strike in the Salvadorian Congress, the State of Siege under which Decree 50 had been promulgated was allowed to lapse in January 1987 and Decree 50 itself was not renewed when it expired in the following month. Since then, some branches of the security forces appear to have been adhering to El Salvador's regular Penal Code, according to which detainees, including those suspected of political offences, may be held for 72 hours only, at which point the detention should be

(1) A confession to the security forces is called an "extrajudicial statement" or "confession" to distinguish it from one made to a judge. It should later be ratified before the Judge of the First Instance. Some prisoners try to retract their confessions at this stage, but others charge that continued intimidation (security force officials who allegedly extracted their confessions under torture are present when they appear before the judge) makes it impossible to do so.

acknowledged and the detainee transferred to a recognized detention centre, or alternatively released. Under the Penal Code, political cases should be heard by the regular courts.

Because of these developments, prominent Salvadorian and foreign jurists argue that those imprisoned under Decree 50 are illegally detained and a number of legal actions and individual suits of habeas corpus have been filed to this effect. At the time of writing, the Supreme Court has not yet ruled on their validity.

Amnesty International Concerns

Amnesty International considers that some of those prisoners still detained and whose cases are described in the attached appendix may be prisoners of conscience. The organization is also concerned that in other cases, human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, torture, untried detention and extrajudicial execution have been directed at persons apparently considered suspicious because they had been displaced or had been voluntarily repatriated after having sought refuge abroad. Church, relief and refugee workers have been subjected to similar abuses, apparently solely because of their work with refugees and the displaced.

Amnesty International is asking the Salvadorian authorities for details of each individual's legal situation and for an investigation into allegations of torture and the forced signing of extrajudicial declarations.

* * * *

INDIVIDUAL CASE DETAILSAPPENDIX 11. José Ramiro ALAS CARTAGENA (aged 18)

DETAINED: 14.09.86

* TRANS PR: 24.09.86

** CURR ST: RELEASED

Bricklayer from cantón (hamlet) Jícaro, Las Vueltas, Chalatenango department. Cousin of Luís Ramírez Alas (see below). Left for Honduras in December 1984 and was voluntarily repatriated in December 1985. Detained in San Salvador on 14 September 1986 by the National Guard and apparently asked whether armed guerrillas entered Mesa Grande refugee camp and whether he knew them. He also states he was accused of collaborating with the guerrillas in Las Vueltas and of being a guerrilla leader. He claims that his interrogators banged his head against a desk, beat him on the stomach, dug their fingers into his throat, made him do forced exercises day and night and suspended him with his wrists tied behind his back. José Alas alleges also that he was made to sign a declaration without being allowed to read it. He was released on 18 May 1987.

2. Juan Santos AYALA (aged 21).

DETAINED: 28.09.86

TRANS PR: 09.10.86

CURR ST: PRISONER

Casual labourer (jornalero) from Arcatao, Chalatenango department. Lived in Honduras as a refugee. Detained by the Treasury Police in Las Cabañitas, San Salvador department, together with José Ramos López (see below). Juan Santos Ayala claims to have been beaten, threatened with death and questioned about guerrilla activities at Mesa Grande and the role of international personnel there. He was accused of having meetings with the guerrillas. The exact charges against him are not known.

3. José Pedro CASTRO MENJIVAR (aged 22)

DETAINED: 27.07.86

TRANS PR: 08.08.86

CURR ST: RELEASED

Comes from Arcatao, Chalatenango department. Left for La Virtud refugee camp in Honduras in 1979. Was transferred to Mesa Grande, where he taught primary school, and was voluntarily repatriated on 14 July 1984 with his wife. Both were detained on 27 July 1986 by men in plain clothes and taken to the National Police Headquarters in San Salvador. José Castro states that he was interrogated about Mesa Grande and accused of being a member of the armed opposition, that he was beaten all over, threatened, deprived of sleep and constantly interrogated. He was asked what Jorge Pozuelo (see above) was doing at Mesa Grande and whether he (José Castro) knew whether Pozuelo had links with the guerrillas. He also claims he was made to sign papers without knowing their contents and that he was given coffee, which he believes contained drugs as it made him feel dizzy and gave him a headache, before he was taken before a military judge. José Castro was released on 27 November 1986.

* TRANS PR = date of transfer from the detention centre to La Esperanza men's prison in Mariona, San Salvador department.

** CURR ST = current status.

4. Abel DUBON CASTRO (aged 52) ABDUCTED: 23.01.87
CURR ST: "DISAPP"

Shoemaker. Lived in Mesa Grande during 1980-83. Abel Dubon was abducted from his home in Ilopango, San Salvador department by men in plain clothes on 23 January 1987. He had been abducted on a previous occasion but re-appeared shortly afterwards. Abel Dubon remains "disappeared".

5. Marcos GUARDADO RAMOS (aged 27) DETAINED: 06.01.85
TRANS PR: 31.01.85
CURR ST: RELEASED

Bricklayer's assistant from Arcatao, Chalatenango and a member of the Construction Workers Union. Left for Honduras around August 1980 and was voluntarily repatriated from Mesa Grande in November 1984. Detained in El Poy on 6 January 1985 with José Ignacio Morales (see below) by soldiers of the 4th Infantry Brigade, apparently while on his way back to Honduras to fetch the rest of his family. Transferred to the National Police in Chalatenango and then to the National Police in San Salvador. Marcos Guardado states that when detained, he was told that the refugees at Mesa Grande were guerrillas and that from Mesa Grande, people go out to join the guerrillas. He also states he was beaten, blindfolded, threatened, drugged and forced to sign a statement which he couldn't read. Only later, he claims, when a judge read his confession to him, did he realize he was being accused of participation in guerrilla activities before 1980. Marcos Guardado was released in February 1987.

6. José Julio MEMBREÑO ALVARENGA (aged 21) DETAINED: 31.03.86
TRANS PR: 15.04.86
CURR ST: PRISONER

Casual labourer from Villa Victoria, Sensuntepeque, Cabañas department. Lived

in La Virtud, Honduras in 1980-81 and was voluntarily repatriated. Was detained while doing military service at the Military School in La Unión and accused of being a guerrilla infiltrator. He states he was transferred to the National Guard in San Miguel where he was beaten, tied to iron bars and whipped. The charges against him are not known.

7. José Domingo MEMBREÑO HERNANDEZ (aged 34) DETAINED: 13.09.85
TRANS PR: 27.09.85
CURR ST: RELEASED

Comes from Villa Victoria, Sensuntepeque, Cabañas department. Left for Honduras in 1980 with most of his fellow villagers. Was voluntarily repatriated from Mesa Grande on 11 October 1984. Reportedly detained by Civil Defense members on his way from San Salvador to Villa Victoria to get identity documents and interrogated about guerrilla presence in Mesa Grande. He stated that when he was brought before a judge, he denied the charges that he was a guerrilla collaborator, adding that anything he had previously said, had been done under duress. José Membreño was released on 27 November 1986.

8. José Pedro MENJIVAR GUARDADO (aged 36) DETAINED: 15.12.86
TRANS PR: 30.12.86
CURR ST: PRISONER

Casual labourer from San José Las Flores, Chalatenango. Lived in Mesa Grande from 1982 to November 1984. José Menjivar claims that while detained, he was forced to sign an extrajudicial declaration which he was not allowed to read and which accused him of belonging to the armed opposition. See his testimony, attached (Appendix 5).

9. Manuel Antonio MENJIVAR LOPEZ (aged 19) DETAINED: 03.10.86
TRANS PR: 11.10.86
CURR ST: PRISONER

Agricultor (farmer) from Las Vueltas, Chalatenango. Lived in La Virtud and Mesa Grande from 1980 to December 1985. Detained in Sonsonate by members of the National Guard.

10. Ulises Walberto MENJIVAR LOPEZ (aged 17) DETAINED: 03.10.86
TRANS PR: 11.10.86
CURR ST: PRISONER

Farmer. Brother of Manuel Antonio Menjivar López (see above). Lived in La Virtud and Mesa Grande from 1980 to July 1986. Detained in Sonsonate by members of the National Guard.

11. Francisco MENJIVAR MIRANDA (aged 24) DETAINED: 25.01.86
TRANS PR: 07.02.86
CURR ST: PRISONER

Small farmer from cantón Los Riveras, San Antonio La Cruz, Chalatenango. Left for La Virtud in 1981 and was transferred to Mesa Grande. He was voluntarily repatriated in 1984. Francisco Menjivar claims that while detained, he was tortured and drugged and was then forced to sign an extrajudicial statement which he was not allowed to read. See testimony, attached (Appendix 4).

12. José Ignacio MORALES HENRIQUEZ (aged 29) DETAINED: 06.01.85
TRANS PR: 31.01.85
CURR ST: RELEASED

Casual labourer from San Antonio La Cruz, Chalatenango. Left for La Virtud, Honduras in October 1980 and was moved to Mesa Grande in December 1981. Was voluntarily repatriated in August 1984. He states that he was detained on 6 January 1985 in El Poy while trying to return to Honduras with his common law wife's birth certificate, to enable her to return to El Salvador with him. He also states that during his detention at the 4th Infantry Brigade, he was questioned about Mesa Grande and about his activities prior to his departure for Honduras but not about anything he had done since his return. He was held for 24 days before being transferred to Mariona prison, ie. well over the maximum 15 days of administrative detention, permitted under the then applicable Decree Law 50. José Morales was released in January 1987.

13. José Gonzalo PALMA MOLINA (aged 40) DETAINED: 30.09.84
TRANS PR: 13.10.84
CURR ST: PRISONER

Comes from Las Vueltas, Chalatenango. Lived in Mesa Grande from 1981 to March 1984. The charges against him are not known.

14. Marcelino PEREIRA SAENZ (aged 23) DETAINED: 14.11.85
TRANS PR: 06.12.85
CURR ST: PRISONER

Casual labourer from Meanguera, Morazán department. Left for Buenos Aires refugee camp, Honduras, in early 1985 and was voluntarily repatriated in November 1985. He was reportedly detained on 14 November, at the border crossing of El Amatillo and accused of having returned to El Salvador "to give the soldiers hell". The charges against him are not known.

15. Catalino PINEDA HERNANDEZ (aged 49) DETAINED: 14.08.86
TRANS PR: 25.08.86
CURR ST: RELEASED



Carpenter from Arcatao, Chalatenango department. Left for Honduras in 1982 and was voluntarily repatriated from Mesa Grande in October 1984. He was detained by members of the National Police in Soyapango on 14 August 1986. His daughters Rosa Nelly (aged 16) and Gloria Carolina (aged 18) were also detained that day. Both girls were released several days later, reportedly after their father, who is illiterate, had been beaten, threatened that his daughters would be raped and made to place his thumbprints on a declaration he was unable to read. Catalino Pineda was released from Mariona prison on 27 November 1986.

Catalino Pineda with
daughter Rosa Nelly

16. Luis RAMIREZ ALAS (aged 46) DETAINED: 23.05.86
TRANS PR: 06.06.86
CURR ST: RELEASED

Casual labourer from cantón Las Minas, Chalatenango department. Cousin of José Ramiro ALAS (see above). Left for Honduras in October 1981 and was voluntarily repatriated from Mesa Grande on 21 February 1984. Luis Ramirez stated that after being detained on 23 May 1986, he was questioned about Mesa Grande and whether the people there were guerrilla sympathizers. See his testimony, attached (Appendix 2). He was released on 18 May 1987.

17. José RAMOS LOPEZ (aged 21)

DETAINED: 28.09.86
 TRANS PR: 09.10.86
 CURR ST: PRISONER

Casual labourer from Arcatao, Chalatenango. Left for Honduras in 1982 and returned from Mesa Grande with his family in 1985. Detained in Las Cabañitas, San Salvador department on 28 September 1986 by the Treasury Police and reportedly questioned about Mesa Grande and accused of collaborating with the guerrillas.

18. Modesto RIVERA VARELA (aged 18)

DETAINED: 22.07.86
 TRANS PR: 30.07.86
 CURR ST: PRISONER

Casual labourer from cantón Riveras, Nueva Trinidad, Chalatenango department. Left for Honduras in 1983 and was voluntarily repatriated from Mesa Grande in 1986. Was detained at home in cantón Riveras by uniformed soldiers. Modesto Rivera claims that while detained, he was forced to sign an extrajudicial declaration in which he was accused of belonging to the armed opposition. See his testimony, attached (Appendix 3).

19. Juan Evelio RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ (aged 23)

DETAINED: 28.01.86
 TRANS PR: 31.01.86
 CURR ST: PRISONER

Casual labourer from cantón Joya Grande, Apopa, San Salvador department. Lived in Mesa Grande for six months and was voluntarily repatriated on 19 January 1986. Juan Rodríguez was detained nine days later, near Apopa, and claims he was tied up, blindfolded and threatened. The charges against him are not known.

20. Benedicto SERRANO ALAS (aged 18)

DETAINED: 06.10.86
 TRANS PR: 16.10.86
 CURR ST: PRISONER

Comes from Arcatao, Chalatenango department. Left for Honduras with his father in March 1980 and was voluntarily repatriated from Mesa Grande on 7 November 1984. He was detained in San Pablo Tacachico by soldiers of the Artillery Battalion of San Juan Opico on 6 October 1986, held for four days and on 10 October, the day of the earthquake, transferred to the National Police in San Salvador. He claims he was kept bound and blindfolded during the earthquake and hoped the walls would collapse on him and end the trauma he was experiencing. He states that he was told that all the guerrillas from Chalatenango go to Mesa Grande and asked where he kept the guns and the mines. He also states that he was forced to sign a declaration with his fingerprints. The charges against him are not known.

21. Manuel de Jesús SIBRIAN LEONEZ (aged 21)

DETAINED: 07.06.84
 TRANS PR: 19.06.84
 CURR ST: RELEASED

Comes from Cantón La Hacienda, San José Las Flores, Chalatenango department. Left for Honduras around March 1980 with others from his village. According to his testimony, they were met by UNHCR representatives

at the border and taken to Chinquin, near Guarita, where Manuel de Jesús Sibrian remained for about a year before being moved to Mesa Grande. He states that he decided to return to El Salvador in December 1983 because he wanted to be nearer to his family and become self-sufficient and also because there was talk that the refugee camp would be moved further inland.

He was detained in Santa Tecla on 7 June 1984 by men in plain clothes and was held at the National Police Headquarters in San Salvador for 12 days. He states that during interrogation he was accused of being a guerrilla in 1980-83 and was questioned about Mesa Grande; whether there were airplanes and helicopters there, what the names of the UNHCR representatives and other international personnel there were. He also states that he was beaten, thrown onto the floor, threatened with death and kept standing for two days. He denied the accusations against him in his declaration, telling the military judge that he had signed it under pressure. Manuel de Jesús Sibrian believes he was arrested "for having been absent" (ie. for having been a refugee). He was released on 17 December 1986.

22. Miguel Angel SOLIS (aged 23)

DETAINED: .04.86
TRANS PR: NOTKNOWN
CURR ST: PRISONER

Comes from Arcatao, Chalatenango department. Lived in Mesa Grande from September 1983 to September 1984.

23. Miguel Angel TREJOS DEL CID (in his twenties)

DETAINED: .12.85
TRANS PR: 20.12.85
CURR ST: RELEASED

Comes from San Fernando, Morazán department. Left for Buenos Aires refugee camp, Honduras in mid-1985 and was voluntarily repatriated in November 1985. Detained by members of the Civil Defense in San Miguel in December 1985. He states that he was questioned about guerrilla activities in Morazán and in the refugee camps in Honduras. Miguel Angel Trejos was released on 2 February 1987.

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APPENDIX 2

TESTIMONY OF LUIS RAMIREZ ALAS

"On 23 May 1986, at about 3 o'clock in the morning, I was sleeping at home when I heard gun-shots. After a few moments there was a knock at my door. I asked who was there and they answered that it was the authorities. My wife opened the door, then the soldiers entered the house and began to search. They asked me for my I.D., then they told me to come out into the corridor of the house. There they tied me up and blindfolded me. I asked them why they were capturing me, but they told me that they would tell at the Artillery Barracks what the motives were for my capture. They put me into a military lorry and took me to the local command post of Nejapa.

The following day, at about 7 o'clock in the morning, a lorry from the armed forces arrived. They put me in the lorry and took me to the Artillery Barracks. When we arrived, they took me to a small room and started to interrogate me ... They accused me of being a guerrilla. I told them that I had never been involved in these things, but they insisted that I would tell them the truth. They hit me to make me confess, they punched me in the chest, they kicked me in the legs.

I was held for seven days during which time they gave me nothing to eat or drink. When I asked for a little water they kicked me in the ribs. After seven days of being held in the Artillery Barracks, they took me to the National Guard of San Salvador. I was there for eight days. They also interrogated me there, but there they didn't hit me. They made me sign some papers, but they didn't read these papers to me, neither could I read them because I cannot read.⁽¹⁾ They gave me something to eat. They held me in an underground cell. On Friday 6 June they took me from the National Guard and took me straight to Mariona prison, accused of political crimes.

In 1981 I went with my whole family to the refuge of Mesa Grande in Honduras, fleeing from the army's operations in cantón Las Minas. We lived there until the beginning of February 1984, when I returned with my whole family to El Salvador, and we went to live in cantón Camotepeque, jurisdiction of Nejapa, San Salvador department. We lived there because the little house we lived in in cantón Las Minas was destroyed by a bomb during an army operation. During one army operation in 1980, a cousin of mine died - Alberto Alas - but I don't know if a bomb killed him, or if he was killed by a burst of aeroplane fire, because I was not there when his happened. I don't know the details of his death."

La Esperanza prison, 18 March 1987

(1) It was only when the military judge read his confession to him, that he realized he was being accused of collaborating with the guerrillas. Luis Ramirez denied everything, saying that never in his life had he carried a weapon of any kind.

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APPENDIX 3

TESTIMONY OF MODESTO RIVERA VARELA

"On 22 July 1986, at about 4.30 pm I was at home when a group of uniformed soldiers arrived at my house. They came straight in and grabbed hold of me, tied me up and blindfolded me. One of the soldiers kneed me in the side of my stomach, which damaged my spleen. They also grabbed one of my brothers Roberto Rivera Varela, about 15 years old, single, my sister Lilian Rivera Varela, about 20 years old, single, and my other sister Rosa Rivera Varela, about 19 years old, accompanied, and my brother-in-law Alfredo García Zetino, about 27 years old, common law husband of my sister Rosa. They took us all, tied up and blindfolded, on a military lorry, heading for the 2nd Battalion barracks of the 1st Military Detachment of Chalatenango. This I found out whilst being detained there.

That night we were all tied and blindfolded, the soldiers interrogated all of us. They told me 'if I had been with the guerrillas'. I denied all of this. They accused me of having participated in terrorist activities and of being organized with my whole family. I heard them interrogate my whole family; they accused them of the same things. This interrogation lasted all night and finished about 4 o'clock in the morning. Then they let me rest for a while, but afterwards continued interrogating me.

On Tuesday 23 July, they continued to interrogate me ... Then they brought me out and took me to the 1st Military Detachment barracks, the Headquarters. They also took the rest of my family there. There in the Headquarters they read some papers to me which stated that I belonged to terrorist organizations and when they read the statement to me, they told me I had to sign it. But I didn't want to. Then a soldier grabbed hold of my hand and forced me to sign. So in other words, I had no choice but to sign...

From 1983 to the beginning of 1986 all of my family were living in the Mesa Grande refuge in Honduras. My family had gone to live there, fleeing from the harrassment of the army where we lived in cantón Riveras, and moreover, because in 1980, the soldiers killed an aunt, Teresa Varela, 35 years old, ... They also killed three of her children ... The soldiers came to the house and killed them without any motive.

At the beginning of 1986, my whole family went back to our place of origin in cantón Riveras. We lived and worked there until they captured me and my family. After being a prisoner for three months in Mariona, I learned that my sister Rosa Rivera Varela had been sent to the women's prison, for political crimes. I also learned that the rest of my family had been freed."

La Esperanza prison, 18 March 1987

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APPENDIX 4

TESTIMONY OF FRANCISCO MENJIVAR MIRANDA

"On 25 January 1986, at 4 pm, I was in the town hall of Nueva Concepción, because I was taking out a new I.D. because mine was outdated. When I came out of the office and was on the corner of the town hall. I saw a uniformed policeman and three detectives from the National Police ... The detectives called me and told me I had to go with them ... They told me I had no right to ask questions. They grabbed me and took me to the Comandancia (police station) ... The police who were there didn't know why I had been captured and asked me why they had brought me. I answered I didn't know either. Then the ones who grabbed me arrived and put a blindfold over my eyes and took me to a dark room where they began to interrogate me and told me that I belonged to terrorist groups ... When I told them it was not true, they hit me, gave me electric shocks, hit me with a stick on the head and kept me dressed only in my underpants. This lasted for three days... As I hadn't accepted any charges during those three days, they said they'd send me to the Treasury Police where I was sure to accept the charges. So they took me to the Treasury Police in San Salvador ... they led me to a secret cell ... they accused me of collaborating with the guerrillas, which I denied, and they told me that whether I denied or not, they would send me to Mariona ... They gave me a soft drink, which contained a drug. They forced me to drink it. I felt bad, and they continued interrogating me. Then I told them that I had been in Honduras, in a refuge. When I told them this, they asked me if guerrillas arrived in Honduras, to which I answered that I didn't know anything about this. They told me to sign some papers for my freedom. I asked permission to read the papers and they answered I was forbidden to read them. To which I replied that it is also forbidden to sign something when you don't know what it is. As I was drugged, they took my hand and practically signed it themselves.

On 25 October 1980 I lived in cantón Los Riveras, San Antonio de la Cruz jurisdiction. I had to leave this place with my whole family to go to Honduras, for fear that something might happen to us."

La Esperanza prison, 18 March 1987

AMR 29/35/87

APPENDIX 5TESTIMONY OF JOSE PEDRO MENJIVAR GUARDADO

"On 15 December 1986 ... I was working at the 4th Infantry Barracks, tending the grounds outside the barracks ... They came to call me and took me inside the control post for interrogation ... Then the soldiers put a blindfold on me and tied me up ... They called me by the name of Vitelio Vasquez, but I told them that wasn't my name. They said I had changed my name. They accused me of having participated in terrorist activities, of being organized. They accused me of being a guerrilla infiltrator in the army. I told them I didn't know what they were talking about. They threatened me with death if I didn't admit their accusations ... I was detained in these barracks for eight days, all the time naked, tied up and blindfolded. They forced me to sign papers which they read to me afterwards, saying that I belonged to terrorist organizations and that I was a guerrilla infiltrator ... They took me to the National Police of Chalatenango ... then to the National Police of Santa Tecla ... On 30 December 1986 they took me ... to Mariona Prison, accused of belonging to terrorist organizations and of being a guerrilla infiltrator in the army.

In 1980 ... my sister was assassinated, Marina Guardado Sibrian, 18 years old ... Several hooded men came to take her from the house at night ... In the morning she was found dead about 30 metres from the house. The shots were heard but my family did not go out because they were afraid. It wasn't until the morning when the men had gone that we went out to look and we found her body on the ground, with bullet wounds all over her body. We still don't know who killed her or what the motives were for her assassination."

La Esperanza prison, 18 March 1987