



# CENTRAL AMERICA SPECIAL ACTION (CASA)

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E L S A L V A D O R

21 May 1982

CASA 24/82 Human rights violations affecting human rights activists

1. María Jesús ECHEVERRIA  
Juana LARA  
together with several children

Amnesty International has received reports that the above two women, who are both members of the Comité de Madres y Familiares de Presos, Desaparecidos y Asesinados Políticos, Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, the 'Disappeared' and Victims of Political Killings, themselves 'disappeared', together with several children, in April of this year. Amnesty International has no further details at present.

2. Tomás Antonio LEIVA

Journalist and member of the Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES), El Salvador Human Rights Commission, an independent human rights monitoring group which both provides assistance to victims of human rights abuses and publicizes their cases. Tomás Antonio Leiva is reported to have been killed by a paramilitary group in Morazán Province in late April or early May. No further details are available to Amnesty International so far.

#### 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 (both military and police units as well as paramilitary squads acting with their implicit or explicit warrant), 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.

Following the elections for a constituent assembly held in the country on 28 March 1982, negotiations continued for some time in an attempt to form a government and agree on important cabinet and other political and military appointments. At the time of writing, a coalition government has been formed, consisting of four ministers from each of the three main parties plus four independent ministers, with Roberto D'Aubuisson, leader of the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA), Nationalist Republican Alliance, as President of the Constituent Assembly. Reports of human rights violations involving the official security forces have continued unabated throughout the period following the elections.

Those who themselves have been active in the defence of the human rights of the people of El Salvador have frequently become the target of such violations. In January 1981 the information and administration secretary of the El Salvador Human Rights Commission, Victor Medrano, was arrested and held in the headquarters of the National Police in San Salvador until 11 February 1981. In early October 1980 María Magdalena Enríquez, press secretary of the Commission, was found dead in a shallow grave about 20 miles from San Salvador. She had been abducted on 3 October 1980. Another representative of the Commission, Ramón Valladares Pérez, was killed on 26 October 1980 by unidentified gunmen. In December 1981, three more members of the Commission were arrested - Carlos Eduardo Viver, aged 20, medical student at the National University, Norberto Huevo Martínez, aged 25, student of odontology at the National University, and Francisco Antonio Barraza, aged 27, a secondary school teacher. They were later located in the cavalry barracks of the 5th Infantry Regiment in San Vicente. However, they are still being held illegally and no charges have been brought against them.

#### Recommended Action

Express letters and letters expressing concern about the 'disappearance' of María Jesús Echeverría and Juana Lara and the killing of Tomás Antonio Leiva. In the case of the two women and children, urge that their physical safety be guaranteed and request details of their place of detention and legal situation. In the case of Tomás Antonio Leiva, request an investigation into the circumstances of his death. In the latter case, appeals from journalists in particular are requested.

#### Appeals to:

S.E. don Alvaro Magaña (new President of the Republic)  
Presidente de la República de El Salvador  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR

Sr. Manuel Sermeno (new Minister of the Interior)  
Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior  
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR

#### Copies to:

General José Guillermo GARCIA (Minister of Defence and Public Security as before)  
Ministro de Defensa y Seguridad Pública  
Ministerio de Defensa y Seguridad Pública  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR

CDHES  
Av. las Américas y Calle San José  
Urb. Isidro Menéndez, Edif. ACUS  
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR

(El Salvador Human Rights  
Commission)

Monseñor Arturo Rivera y Damas  
Seminario San José de la Montaña  
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR

(Acting Archbishop of San  
San Salvador)

(In the latter case, copies of appeals from persons representing church institutions are particularly requested.)

Copies also to Salvadorian diplomatic representatives in your country.