

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture

24 June 1986

EL SALVADOR:

- José Antonio GARCIA HERNANDEZ (30), Secretary of the *Sociedad Unión de Carteros y Empleados Postales de El Salvador* (SUCEPES), Salvadorian Postmen and Postal Workers Union
- Julio ROJAS (46), member of SUCEPES

Amnesty International has received reports that in the early hours of 20 June 1986, uniformed members of the Salvadorian National Police searched, without having produced a warrant, the homes of several leaders and members of SUCEPES in the capital San Salvador and detained José Antonio GARCIA and Julio ROJAS. Two other SUCEPES leaders, Victor Manuel MARTINEZ (President) and Francisco Javier PALACIOS (Vice-President) were also detained but were subsequently released.

Further reports indicate that the homes of Virgilio FUENTES, Omar SANTAMARIA and Balmores RODRIGUEZ, affiliated members of SUCEPES, were also searched, as well as the homes of eight members of a union committee involved in negotiating urban transport compensation for the postmen.

José Antonio Garcia and Julio Rojas are reportedly being held under investigation at the National Police Headquarters in San Salvador for alleged involvement in the 6 May 1986 killing of José Aristides MENDEZ, Secretary General of the *Asociación Nacional de Empleados Postales de El Salvador* (ANAPES), National Association of Postal Employees of El Salvador, described as pro-government. SUCEPES has denied having any participation in the killing.

Political prisoners in El Salvador are held under the provisions of Decree Law 50, promulgated in February 1984 and applicable while Constitutional guarantees are suspended during the current State of Siege. It governs penal proceedings against persons accused of offences against the State and allows for up to 15 days of administrative detention, during which the detainee is not allowed access to legal counsel or relatives. It is during this period of administrative detention that prisoners are frequently reported to be forced into signing statements, implicating themselves or others in offences against the State. Amnesty international has received numerous reports indicating that such statements are customarily obtained under torture or death threats, and that the prisoner may be forced to sign while blindfolded or coerced into signing blank pages. According to Art. 28 of Decree 50, these statements may be used as evidence against the prisoner.

The detention of the SUCEPES leaders is the latest in a series of arrests of trade unionists in El Salvador. In April 1986, four members of the Transport and Related Industries Workers Union (STINTS) were detained by members of the National Guard (see UA 73/86, AMR 29/22/86 and AMR 29/27/86). All four are said to have been subjected to prolonged periods of sleep deprivation; they were kept handcuffed and blindfolded; were forced to remain standing and were not allowed food and water. They were subsequently transferred to La Esperanza men's prison. The specific charges against them, if any, are not known.

Victor Manuel MARTINEZ was previously detained on 31 October 1985 after leaving a union meeting in San Salvador (see AMR 29/06/86 – Human Rights Violations directed against Trade Unionists in El Salvador). He was reportedly held by the Treasury Police on accusations of being a leading member of the Communist Party, but was released on 9 November following strike action by SUCEPES in support of his release.

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

- expressing concern at numerous allegations of torture of political prisoners while being held in administrative detention and asking for guarantees that the two trade union leaders be treated humanely while in detention;
asking that if detained solely for their legitimate trade union activities, they be released immediately;
- if charged, urging that internationally recognized standards for a fair trial be adhered to and that they be allowed access to legal counsel of their choice and relatives.

APPEALS TO:

Exmo. Sr. José Napoleón Duarte
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Cor. Adolfo Antonio Revelo
Director General de la Policía Nacional
6 Calle Oriente
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams to: Presidente Duarte,
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams to: Director General, Policía
Nacional, San Salvador, El Salvador

Telexes to: 20445 cgfa sal, 20245 rs sal

Cor. Reynaldo López Nuila
Vice-Ministro de Defensa y de Seguridad Pública
Ministerio de Defensa y de Seguridad Pública
Doble Vía a Santa Tecla
San Salvador, El Salvador

Lic. Julio Adolfo Rey Prendes
Ministro de Cultura y Comunicaciones
Ministerio de Cultura y Comunicaciones
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams to: Vice-Ministro Defensa
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams to: Ministro Cultura,
San Salvador, El Salvador

COPIES TO:

Dr. Julio Alfredo Samayoa
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
3a Av. Norte y 11a Calle Poniente
San Salvador, El Salvador

El Mundo
2a Av. Norte No 211
San Salvador, El Salvador

(newspaper)

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador in your country.

Please organize appeals from TRADE UNIONS, particularly those in related industries.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Please check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 August 1986.