

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

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Fear of Torture

8 July 1986

EL SALVADOR: Febe Elizabeth VELASQUEZ, Secretary for International Relations of the *Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores de El Salvador* (FENASTRAS), National Federation of Salvadorian Workers

Amnesty International has received reports that Febe Elizabeth Velasquez was taken into custody on 7 July 1986 by men in plain clothes. She is believed to be held at the headquarters of the *Policia de Hacienda* (Treasury Police).

Amnesty International is seriously concerned that Febe Elizabeth Velasquez may be tortured while in custody. The Treasury Police is one of El Salvador's security branches frequently cited as responsible for torture and ill-treatment of political detainees.

Febe Elizabeth Velasquez has spoken publicly on behalf of FENASTRAS during recent mass union demonstrations in the capital San Salvador. Her detention is the latest in a series of recent arbitrary arrests of trade unionists. On 20 June 1986 two members of the *Sociedad Union de Carteros y Empleados Postales de El Salvador* (SUCEPES), Salvadorian Postmen and Postal Workers Union, were taken into custody by the National Police (see UA 167/86 AMR 29/40/86 24 June). In April four members of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Nacional del Transporte, Similares y Conexos* (STINTS), Transport and Related Industries Workers' Union were held under investigation by the National Guard (see UA 73/86 AMR 29/22/86 7 April, AMR 29/22/86 1 May). (See also a circular issued by Amnesty International in January 1986 detailing human rights abuses directed against trade unionists – AMR 29/06/86.)

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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 people accused of offences against the State and allows for up to 15 days of administrative detention, during which detainees are not allowed access to legal counsel or relatives. It is during this period of administrative detention that detainees 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 obtained under torture or death threats, and that the detainee may be forced to sign while blindfolded or coerced into signing blank pages. According to Article 28 of decree Law 50, these statements may be used in evidence against the detainee.

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

- expressing concern about reports of the detention of Febe Elizabeth Velasquez, and requesting information about the legal basis for her detention
- urging that she be immediately released if she has been detained solely because of her legitimate trade union activities
- if charged, urging that she be allowed immediate access to legal counsel and relatives, and that she be promptly tried according to internationally recognized standards for a fair trial
- urging that she be humanely treated while in detention, and that no statement which might be made under duress be used as evidence against her.

APPEALS TO:

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

Cor. Rinaldo Golcher  
Comandante de la Policía de Hacienda  
Calle Concepción  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams to: Presidente Duarte,  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams to: Comandante Policía  
Hacienda, 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 Via a Santa Tecla  
San Salvador, El Salvador

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

COPIES TO:

Dr. José Francisco Guerrero  
Procurador General  
1a Av. Norte y 5a Calle Poniente  
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Attorney General)

CDH (gubernamental)  
Dr Benjamin Cestoni  
2a Planta  
Edif. Fiscalia General de la República  
Centro de Gobierno  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores  
Salvadoreños (FENASTRAS)  
Av. 29 Agosto  
Plaza Barrios, 2 pisa No. 29  
San Salvador, El Salvador

(governmental human rights  
commission)

(National Trade Union Federation of Salvadorian  
Workers)

and to Salvadorian diplomatic representatives in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Please check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 August 1986.