

**URGENT
ACTION**

**amnesty
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EXTERNAL (for
general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 29/76/82
Distr: UA

23 August 1982

Further information on UA 185/82 (AMR 29/68/82 5 August) - "Disappearance"/
Fear of Torture

EL SALVADOR: Patricia CUELLAR
Mauricio CUELLAR
=====

Amnesty International has received the following information from the Embassy of the United States in London concerning the disappearance of Patricia and Mauricio Cuellar:

"Patricia Cuellar de Alvarez, an American citizen, disappeared sometime on 28 July 1982. Mauricio Cuellar, her father and a prominent member of the Salvadoran business community, apparently disappeared later that same night or the following morning. Mr Cuellar's maid is missing as well. Prior to her disappearance, Patricia Cuellar had worked on an irregular basis for the Legal Aid Office which formerly identified itself with the Archbishopric of San Salvador.

Since first learning of this disappearance on 29 July 1982, the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador has contacted the President of El Salvador, the Defense Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Directors General of the three Salvadoran security forces, Ms Cuellar's family, her neighbors, Socorro Juridico representatives, and representatives from the Archdiocese. The national police have assigned two senior investigators to work this case on a full-time basis. The Regional Legal Attache from the FBI spent three full days in El Salvador assisting in the investigation and is prepared to return at the first sign of a break in the case. At this time, the Embassy is satisfied that a serious investigation is being conducted into the disappearance of Patricia Cuellar. Both the Embassy and the national police are cooperating with the Socorro Juridico representatives.

So far, the investigation has shed little light on the whereabouts of Patricia Cuellar, her father, or her father's maid. There is no evidence at this time that she was "captured" or "arrested" by the Salvadoran security forces. All of the Salvadoran security forces denied, in writing, that Ms Cuellar was arrested or detained by their personnel. There is no evidence that her apartment was ransacked after her disappearance. Statements to the contrary are incorrect. Her apartment is in good order. Only a few possessions are missing, and it has been impossible to tell whether these were stolen or removed previously by the occupant. In short, there are very few leads as to the whereabouts of Patricia Cuellar at this time.

The Embassy in San Salvador is following this investigation carefully and has offered full cooperation to the Salvadoran authorities in assisting with this case. All leads and possibilities will be considered until such time as Ms Cuellar's whereabouts are clarified. The Embassy

Amnesty International is an independent worldwide movement working for the international protection of human rights. It seeks the release of men and women detained anywhere because of their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religious creed, provided they have not used or advocated violence. These are termed *prisoners of conscience*. It works for fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners and works on behalf of such people detained without charge or trial. It opposes the *death penalty* and *torture* or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of all *prisoners* without reservation.

has devoted and will continue to devote its full resources until it learns what happened to Patricia Cuellar.

We appreciate Amnesty International's concern for Ms Cuellar and her family and are pleased to provide you with the information we have available."

Amnesty International has also received details of the information presented to the El Salvador Supreme Court by relatives of the two missing people in a petition of *habeas corpus* on their behalf:

"24-year-old secretary Patricia Cuellar de Alvarez, a U.S. citizen resident in El Salvador, was arrested on 28 July 1982 between 11 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon. On the morning of the previous day, she had reportedly been followed by two men in plain clothes. On 28 July she remained in her home in Colonia Roma, San Salvador (an area that is usually heavily patrolled by the armed forces) until 11 a.m. when she took her three children to their kindergarten. At 7 p.m. that day the kindergarten informed Patricia's father, Mauricio Cuellar, that the children's mother had not come to pick them up. At 11 p.m. several men in olive green uniform, travelling in a blue pick-up truck and a green jeep, went to Patricia's apartment and reportedly entered without forcing the door because they had the keys to the flat. They then searched it and took away all the furniture and anything else that was there. They had to make three journeys to remove everything and at no point were they apprehended by the security forces who permanently guard the area around Patricia Cuellar's apartment. During the night unidentified men abducted Patricia's father, Mauricio Cuellar, a 56-year-old businessman and head of the *Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales*, Salvadorian Association of Industrialists, from his home, together with his maid whose name is not known. Eyewitnesses allege that their captors were wearing olive green uniform."

Further recommended action:

Please renew appeals to the Salvadorian authorities, noting that the National Police are carrying out an investigation and pointing out the apparent discrepancies between the version of events described in the petition of *habeas corpus* and the information provided by the U.S. Embassy.

.../...

– Please take action as soon as you receive this Urgent Action appeal. Carefully read the recommended action. If possible, send a telegram or express letter immediately to one or more of the addresses given. Other letters can be sent afterwards.

– Telegrams and letters should be brief and courteous. Stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. Refer to relevant provisions in international law, such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 3 – "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

Article 5 – "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Article 9 – "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

– The name of Amnesty International may be used, although letters written in a private or personal capacity are often more effective.

– Copies of appeals should be sent to relevant diplomatic representatives in your country.

– In Urgent Action cases, Amnesty International has to act rapidly to prevent the ill-treatment of prisoners. An appeal is issued when Amnesty International believes it has received reliable and accurate information in such cases. It is not always possible to verify all details independently and in some instances the situation outlined in the appeal may change. Urgent Action participants are always notified of any significant new information.

– Copies of any replies received from government authorities should be sent immediately to your national section Urgent Action coordinator or direct to the International Secretariat. If appropriate, thank the official who has replied and ask to be kept informed about the case.

Appeals to:

S.E. Alvaro Magaña Borja
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador
*(President & Commander-in-Chief
of the Armed Forces)*

Coronel Nicolas Carranza
Director General de la Policía Nacional
Cuartel General de la Policía Nacional
San Salvador, El Salvador

Copies to:

Comisión Arquidiocesana de Justicia y Paz
Arzobispado de San Salvador
Urbanización Isidro Menéndez
Calle San José
Avenida Las Américas
Apartado Postal 22 53
San Salvador, El Salvador
(Archdiocese Justice and Peace Commission)

Sr. Deane Hinton
Embajador de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica en
la República de El Salvador
Embajada de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica
25 Avenida Norte
San Salvador

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador and the USA in your country.