

**URGENT  
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ACTION**

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"Disappearance"

24 August 1982

EL SALVADOR: América Fernanda PERDOMO *also*: Maria Helena MARTINEZ DE RECINOS,  
(Saúl VILLALTA ) her 13-year-old daughter and her  
----- maid

América Fernanda Perdomo, aged 24 and the public relations officer of the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador* (CDHES - El Salvador Human Rights Commission) was arrested on the afternoon of 20 August 1982 in the suburb of Ciudad Satélite, San Salvador. She was arrested together with Saúl Villalta, a member of the executive committee of the *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR - the Democratic Revolutionary Front), a coalition of opposition parties formed in April 1980. According to reports, América Perdomo was meeting Sr. Villalta on behalf of the CDHES to discuss the release of military personnel being held by guerrillas belonging to the *Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional* (FMLN), the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. The FMLN is a coalition of groups which is conducting military opposition to the Salvadorian government. (There are links between some of the groups that make up the FMLN and those that make up the FDR.)

The two were also reported to have been discussing a multi-party, multi-national agreement to free political prisoners. CDHES has stated that the meeting was held for purely humanitarian reasons. América Perdomo and Saúl Villalta are alleged to have been arrested by the *Policía de Hacienda* (Treasury Police). Although the Treasury Police have denied holding the two, unofficial sources report that they are being held at the headquarters of the Treasury Police in San Salvador.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the safety of América Perdomo and Saúl Villalta.

Background information

Amnesty International has been following the human rights situation in El Salvador closely for a number of years, and has concluded that the security forces have been regularly involved in a systematic and widespread program of torture, "disappearance", and individual and mass killings of men, women and children. The victims have included not only people suspected of opposition to the authorities, but thousands who were simply resident in areas targeted for security operations, whose murder or mutilation seems to have been completely arbitrary. Victims of arbitrary detention, "disappearance" and murder have included priests, trade unionists, church workers, human rights activists, teachers, academics, peasant families, community workers and medical personnel, as well as patients abducted from their sickbeds or murdered in hospital by security agents.

Following the elections for a constituent assembly held on 28 March 1982, reports of human rights violations involving the official security forces have continued unabated. The violations are occurring in a context

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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.



of continued conflict between the government and opposition forces, but reports received by Amnesty International indicate that non-combatants from all sectors of Salvadorian society continue to be victims of such violations, including arbitrary detention, "disappearance", and extra-judicial executions at the hands of the official military and police services, who act on occasion in conjunction with clandestine paramilitary squads who have their explicit or implicit warrant. As in previous years, in no single instance since the elections have the Salvadorian authorities issued a satisfactory response to enquiries about these violations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Telegrams/express letters/airmail letters requesting clarification of the whereabouts and legal situation of América Fernanda Perdomo and Saúl Villalta and urging that their physical integrity be respected.

APPEALS TO:

Sr. Alvaro Magaña Borja  
Presidente de la República  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
(President)

Telegrams to: Presidente Magaña, San Salvador, El Salvador

Coronel Francisco Morán  
Jefe de la Policía de Hacienda  
Calle Concepción  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
(Head of Treasury Police)

Telegrams to: Coronel Morán, Policía de Hacienda, Calle Concepción, San Salvador, El Salvador

COPIES TO:

General José Guillermo García  
Ministro de Defensa y Seguridad Pública  
Ministerio de Defensa y Seguridad Pública  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
(Minister of Defence)

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador  
Av. las Américas y Calle San José  
Urb. Isidro Menéndez, Edif. ACUS  
San Salvador, El Salvador

and to Salvadorian diplomatic representatives in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Check with the International Secretariat if sending appeals after 25 August 1982.

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The following people were also arrested by the Treasury Police on 20 August 1982 in Ciudad Satélite:

- María Helena MARTINEZ de RECINOS, representative of the *Comité de Madres* (Mothers' Committee) and wife of trade-unionist Hector Bernabé Recinos who was arrested in August 1980 and is still in detention.
- the daughter of María Helena Martínez de Recinos, who is aged 13
- Sra. Martínez de Recinos' maid.

Please include these three people in appeals.

- 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.