



CENTRAL AMERICA SPECIAL ACTION (CASA)

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E L S A L V A D O R

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Further information on CASA 42/82 of 7 August 1982

Recent murders in El Salvador of Christian Democrats

Amnesty International has received reports of the killing of another Christian Democrat mayor in El Salvador. 47-year-old Ramiro PONCE, the mayor of San Lorenzo near San Salvador, was found dead in mid-August. A newspaper report quoted his mother as saying that she found his body shattered by the impact of several volleys of rifle fire at virtual point-blank range. Ponce is the fourteenth Christian Democrat leader to have been killed since the March 1982 elections.

Background

As reported in AMR 29/67/82, the Christian Democrats were granted four posts in the current government of El Salvador following the elections for a constituent assembly held in March 1982. According to the Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC), Christian Democratic Party, the attacks on them are due to a polarization between themselves and the armed forces which occurred at the time of the election and has continued since then. The party claims that, apart from attempts to physically eliminate their parliamentary and municipal representatives, other parties in the government coalition are deliberately seeking the removal of the Christian Democrat ministers. In August, PDC leader and deputy education minister Roberto Serrano is reported to have received anonymous death threats, following the arrest on charges of guerrilla activity of a woman called Ana Lidia Escalante, widely reported to be the wife of Serrano. Serrano was eventually forced to resign when a different woman produced a certificate showing she was married to him, thus implying that he was a bigamist. (See UA 196/82 (AMR 29/74/82) of 19 August 1982 for information concerning the arrest of Ana Lidia Escalante.)

Recommended Action

Follow up any actions taken on the basis of CASA 42/82 (AMR 29/67/82) by sending further appeals expressing concern at the killing of Ramiro Ponce and urging that those responsible be brought to justice. As before, groups may like to approach Christian Democrat parties and members of Parliament or members of government in their country, asking them to address appeals to the Salvadorian authorities. If contact was made previously with members of the European Parliament or Latin American Parliament, please inform them of this latest incident and request them to send further appeals. Please refer to CASA 42/82 for the list of addressees to whom appeals should be addressed or copied.

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For information

Some participants in the action initiated on the basis of CASA 42/82 have received the following reply from the Christian Democratic World Union (107, Via dei Plebiscito, 00186 Rome, Italy):

"Dear Friend,

Rome, 27 September 1982

The Christian Democratic International (UMDC) would like to thank you for the letter you wrote on behalf of Christian Democrats, persecuted and killed, in El Salvador. UMDC greatly appreciates the time and effort you have taken to speak out against violations of human rights. Such politically motivated violations are of special importance to us, as many of our members in Latin America, Asia and Africa have lost their lives, property and citizenship due to their political beliefs based on liberty, democracy and social justice - concepts taken for granted by those living in Western Europe.

We hope both your efforts and ours will be successful in bringing pressure to bear on the governments concerned, competent international organizations/bodies and world public opinion in order that in situations where massive and flagrant violations of human rights exist, attempts will be made to rectify them.

We are convinced that letters such as yours do help. Thanking you again and with my best regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

(signed)
René de León *
Secretary General

* René de León was for many years the President of the Guatemalan Christian Democrat Party.