

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Abduction/torture/attempted killing

28 May 1993

~~EL SALVADOR: Gregorio Menjía Espinoza, secretary general of the~~  
~~Tonacatepeque branch of the Movimiento Popular Social~~  
~~Cristiano (part of the Democratic Convergence, a left-~~  
~~wing coalition of parties)~~

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Gregorio Menjía Espinoza following his abduction, torture and attempted killing by unidentified armed civilians on 23 May 1993 in San Salvador.

According to reports, at about 6.30 am he was walking down a San Salvador street when armed civilians forced him into a vehicle parked by the kerb. A hood was placed over his head and his thumbs were tied behind his back. The car was driven around for about half an hour, first on what seemed like paved roads and later on a dirt track. The car stopped, he was taken out and led into a room. He was made to remove his shoes and trousers and sit on the floor. He could hear noises from a nearby room as if someone were being interrogated and beaten.

Gregorio Menjía was then taken to another room and interrogated about the activities of the Democratic Convergence and about a store of arms which his captors accused him of hiding. He was warned that if he did not cooperate, his life and that of his family would be in danger. During the interrogation, he was allegedly beaten and burned with a metal object on the chest, causing multiple blisters.

Some time later he was taken away in another vehicle together with another man, who had also apparently been detained. The vehicle eventually stopped and Gregorio Menjía was forced to get out. One of the men put a pistol to Gregorio's forehead and pulled the trigger, but the gun did not go off; the man went back to the truck as if to get another gun and Gregorio was able to escape. It is not known what happened to the other captive who remained in the vehicle.

About ten days prior to his abduction, Gregorio Menjía had received a letter warning him that he would be killed (*ajusticiado*) if he didn't stop his activities.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

So far there is no evidence of involvement of official military or security personnel in the abduction, torture and attempted assassination of Gregoria Menjía but Amnesty International believes that the case must be fully investigated to establish who was responsible and bring them to justice. There has not been a pattern of widespread politically motivated killings by "death squads" since the signing of peace accords in January 1992 but some killings have been reported which bear the hallmarks of the "death squads" and which may have been politically motivated. In addition there have been numerous other killings also in "death squad" style where the victim was clearly selected for assassination. In a recent homily, for example, the Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador warned about continuing "death squad" activities, citing the

case of the body of a young woman found on a main road in a known dumping ground for corpses. In May 1993, The National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights (Procurador Nacional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos) also expressed his concern that "corpses have appeared with signs of torture and violence prior to execution".

Pinpointing responsibility for these killings is difficult because of the clandestine way in which the perpetrators operate but it is clear that these well-armed groups are able to operate with impunity. However, the authorities

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have consistently failed to fulfil their obligations to investigate the full circumstances of each killing, identify and prosecute those responsible. In its March 1993 report, the Truth Commission, which had been appointed to investigate massive human rights abuses committed in the context of the civil war between 1980 and January 1992, recommended that the government initiate an urgent special investigation into "death squads" warning that these groups still posed a threat to Salvadorian society. President Cristiani has so far ruled out the possibility of any such investigation.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish, English or in your own language:**

- expressing concern at the abduction, torture and attempted assassination of Gregorio Menjía;
- calling for an immediate investigation to establish the full circumstances of the incident, the identity of those responsible and urging that they be brought to justice;
- urging that all measures be taken to ensure that Gregorio Menjía is fully protected against threats to his life and physical integrity;
- calling for a special investigation to be initiated immediately into allegations of "death squad" activities both during and since the internal conflict to establish the identity of those responsible, the extent of their links with state bodies, the full facts of each of the individual cases investigated; and urging that those found to be responsible be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO**

1) President:

Lic. Alfredo Cristiani Burkard  
Presidente de la República de El Salvador  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, El Salvador

**Salutation: Sr. Presidente**

**Telegrams: Presidente Cristiani, San Salvador, El Salvador**

**Faxes: + 503 81-0018, + 503 71-0950, + 503 22-9109, + 503 22-8514**

**Telexes: 20245 RS SAL, 20522 PRES SAL**

2) Minister for Foreign Affairs:

Dr. José Manuel Pacas Castro  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores  
San Salvador, El Salvador

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro**

**Telegrams: Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores Castro, San Salvador, El Salvador**

**Faxes: + 503 98-0334, + 503 98-0314**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

The National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights:

Dr. Carlos Molina Fonseca

Procurador Nacional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos

9a Avenida Norte y 5a Calle Pte.

Edificio AMSA, no. 535

San Salvador, El Salvador

**Faxes: + 503 71-2886**

Coalition of left-wing parties:

Convergencia Democrática

Calle Guadalupe 1313

San Salvador, El Salvador

**Faxes: + 503 71-0517**

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 July 1993.