

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 29/14/96

UA 273/96

Death threats / Fear for safety

21 November 1996

EL SALVADOR **Dr Victoria Marina Velásquez de Avilés (f), National Human Rights Procurator and members of her family**

Reports indicate that Victoria Marina Velásquez de Avilés, *Procuradora para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos de El Salvador*, National Human Rights Procurator, has been the victim of repeated death threats.

Victoria Marina Velásquez de Avilés told reporters on 19 November that she had been subjected to harassment and death threats since May 1995, reportedly to force her to resign her post. In one of the death threats, unidentified individuals vowed to rape and kill her four daughters.

These threats have reportedly intensified recently, following her denunciations in relation to new clandestine armed groups acting in a manner similar to the "death squads" which were active during the period of armed conflict in El Salvador (1980-1992). Victoria Marina de Avilés has claimed that these armed groups may be linked to members of the *Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC), National Civil Police, created by the peace accords.

Victoria Marina de Avilés was one of 15 individuals -- including the Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador and several members of opposition parties -- named in a communiqué which appeared in the newspaper *El Diario de Hoy* in late June 1996. The communiqué was signed by the newly-formed clandestine armed group, the *Fuerza Nacionalista Roberto d'Aubuisson* (FURODA), Roberto d'Aubisson Nationalist Force, and contained death threats against those listed (see UA 176/96, AMR 29/08/96, 10 July 1996).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

El Salvador is emerging from an armed conflict during which the activities of "death squads" were of great concern to Amnesty International, as they were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of people (see *Peace without justice*, AMR 29/12/93, 1993). Although there have been important improvements since the end of the war, the continued existence of these clandestine armed groups is still of concern. Throughout 1995 and the first half of 1996, Amnesty International has received further reports of harassment and threats against members of non-governmental human rights and civil organizations by such groups (see UA 241/96, AMR 29/12/96, 21 October 1996).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing serious concern about reports of continuing death threats against Victoria Marina Velásquez de Avilés, National Human Rights Prosecutor, and her family;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and thorough investigation into these threats and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for immediate and effective measures to ensure her protection in order to enable her to carry out her activities without fearing for her family's safety or her own.

APPEALS TO:

President of El Salvador

Dr. Armando Calderón Sol
Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Presidente Calderón, San Salvador, El Salvador
Telex: 20245 RS SAL; 20522 PRESS SAL
Fax: +503 271 0950
Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of the Interior
Lic. Mario Acosta Oertel
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Ministro Interior, San Salvador, El Salvador
Fax: +503 271 2484
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman
Dra. Victoria Marina Velásquez de Avilés
Procuradora para la defensa
de los derechos humanos de El Salvador
9a. Avenida Nte. y Calle Poniente
Edificio Amsa No. 535, San Salvador
El Salvador

Newspaper
Sr. Jefe de Redacción
Diario Latino
23 Av. Sur No. 225
Apartado Postal 96,
San Salvador, El Salvador
Fax: 503 271 0971 (if voice ask, "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

If possible, send copies to:

TV Channels
Canal 12 de TV
Fax: +503 278 5046

Canal 4 de TV
Fax: +503 224 5708

Radio station
Radio YSUCA
Fax: +503 243 1302 (if voice ask, "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

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 31 December 1996.