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## EL SALVADOR

### @Attack against human rights worker Mirna Perla de Anaya and family

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**Amnesty International is calling for investigations into an attack on prominent human rights worker Mirna Perla de Anaya and her family on 3 January 1993, when unidentified men opened fire on the vehicle in which they were travelling, injuring her 15-year-old son.**

At 7.15 that evening, Mirna Perla de Anaya, vicepresident of the Costa Rica-based **Comisión para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Centroamerica (CODEHUCA)**, Commission for the Defence of Human Rights in Central America, was driving along the road from Suchitoto to San Salvador with her daughter and son and a US nun, Peggy Fitzgibbon, when at a place called La Pedrera six unidentified men indicated to her to stop by raising a red lamp. The men were armed and some appeared to be wearing military-style uniforms.

Believing them to be police, she slowed down. But as she approached she realized the men had their faces covered, and were ordering her to raise her hands and get out of the car. Instead she accelerated past the men. As she fled, they fired some 12 shots at the car, and her 15-year-old son Miguel Ernesto was injured by splinters. He was taken to hospital in Suchitoto where he received stitches. His injuries were said to be not serious.

Mirna Anaya reported the incident to the police headquarters in Suchitoto, who allegedly told her that they could not investigate the incident because it had occurred outside the town. The place where the incident took place falls within the jurisdiction of Suchitoto police. She also reported it to the local justice of the peace (juez de paz) who took the details but merely recommended that the CDHES denounce the attack as widely as possible.

Neither the judge nor the police appear to have taken any further steps to identify the men responsible.

Mirna Anaya is also a member of the **Comisión de Derechos Humanos no gubernamental de El Salvador (CDHES)** and widow of its former president, Herbert Anaya, killed in 1987. She has recently been active in campaigning on behalf of César Joya Martínez, a deserter from the Salvadorian armed forces who has given testimony about "death squad" operations by the military and who is currently facing trial proceedings. The CDHES has also recently launched a campaign calling for the dismissal and prosecution of human rights violators within the armed forces.

However, the motive for the attack remains unclear. There have been numerous armed attacks, including killings, by unidentified individuals since the January 1992 peace accords which ended the country's civil war. A series of armed assaults have been reported recently around La Pedrera. In the majority of cases throughout the country, the authorities have failed to carry out effective investigations to identify those responsible. Many appear to have been common crimes. AI's concern is that, whether or not government officials were directly involved in these attacks, the State has an obligation to investigate them and bring those responsible to justice. As stated in the Fifth Report of the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Verification Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), in its analysis of recent summary executions:

"...If the government systematically fails to comply with the provisions of domestic and international law which require it to prevent and, where appropriate, investigate cases of summary or arbitrary executions, and bring to trial and punish those responsible, then such a failure is an indication of the Government's responsibility, regardless of whether...evidence exists concerning the direct involvement...of Government officials, whether by action or omission."