

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 29/01/96

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Death threats / Fear for safety

10 January 1996

EL SALVADOR Adrián Esquino Lisco, Nahuat Indian

During the evening of 6 January 1996, Adrián Esquino Lisco, member of the *Asociación Nacional Indígena Salvadoreña (ANIS)*, Salvadorean National Indigenous Association, was threatened with death if he did not leave El Salvador within 72 hours. His house in San Antonio del Monte, department of Sonsonate, was surrounded by at least 10 men wearing civilian clothes and carrying weapons, which they fired in the air as a warning. The men are reportedly acting with the acquiescence of members of ARENA, the ruling party.

Adrián Esquino, chief of the Nahuat, Lenca and Mayan indigenous community of El Salvador, had received a similar death threat on 17 December 1995, after which he had left the country for Guatemala. He returned to El Salvador on 6 January 1996 and received the second death threat.

Members of Adrián Esquino's family - nine sons and some of their wives - have also been attacked or harassed as a result of their activism in ANIS in recent months.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 22 February 1983, sixteen indigenous peasants belonging to the ANIS *Las Hojas* cooperative, in the department of Sonsonate, were detained by members of the Jaguar battalion of the Salvadorean army. When Chief Adrián Esquino Lisco enquired about their whereabouts, the Commander of Military Detachment No. 6 at Sonsonate, who was in charge of the operation, denied holding the detainees. The bodies of the 16 peasants were found later that morning on the banks of the Cuyuapa River.

Although the army claimed that these were guerrillas who had died in a confrontation with soldiers from the Jaguar battalion, the UN Commission on The Truth in El Salvador established in its report of April 1993, that "during the operation, 16 peasants were arrested, bound and summarily executed, and that there was no clash with guerrillas". No one was brought to justice for these crimes, nor was any compensation given to the relatives of the victims as recommended by the 24 September 1992 resolution by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

ANIS has continued to press the Salvadorean authorities for compensation to be given to the relatives of the 16 peasants massacred in *Las Hojas*, and on questions of land ownership.

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

- expressing concern at the continuing death threats against Adrián Esquino Lisco, member of ANIS and Chief of the Nahuat, Lenca and Mayan indigenous community of El Salvador;
- urging the government to take immediate measures to guarantee his safety and that of his family;
- calling for steps to be taken immediately to identify those responsible for the threats and to bring them to justice.

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. Roberto Angulo Samayoa
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:

Attorney General's Office for Human Rights

Dra. Victoria Marina Velásquez de Aviles
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

Salvadorean National Indigenous Association (ANIS)

Sres.
ANIS
Calle Obispo Marroquín,
Oficina Antigua Aduana Férrea 5-1
Sonsonate
El Salvador

Newspaper

Sr. Jefe de redacción
La Prensa Gráfica
3a. Calle Poniente No. 130
San Salvador
El Salvador

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 21 February 1996.