

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal concern

17 March 1993

EL SALVADOR: Proposed Amnesty Law would block investigations into human rights violations

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the Salvadorian parliament is considering a draft law which would grant a sweeping amnesty to those responsible for human rights abuses, committed on a massive scale during the country's civil war (1980-92).

The draft law (*proyecto de ley*) was presented to the Legislative Assembly (parliament) on 15 March 1993 and is to be debated and voted on on 18 March. If approved, the law would shield from prosecution perpetrators of serious human rights abuses, including mass killings and other extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", and torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The draft law was introduced a day after the publication of a report by the Truth Commission (Comisión de la Verdad), a United Nations-appointed body set up to investigate human rights abuses during the war by the Armed Forces and by the armed opposition FMLN. The Truth Commission's report produced overwhelming evidence of the Salvadorian army's involvement in human rights abuses on a massive scale. It also established that the FMLN was responsible for a number of extrajudicial executions.

Amnesty International believes that the work of the Truth Commission would be seriously undermined if, instead of bringing to justice those identified as responsible for past human rights abuses, the government immediately amnesties them. Passing an amnesty law before justice has been done would not only contradict the spirit of the Truth Commission's recommendations, but would be in violation of Salvadorian law and international standards.

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

- noting the unprecedented and important work of the Truth Commission as part of the process of national reconciliation;
- expressing serious concern at the subsequent presentation of a draft amnesty law which could seriously undermine the Commission's work;
- pointing out that an amnesty law granting immunity to human rights violators

would not only contradict the spirit of the recommendations of the truth Commission but would contravene Salvadorian law and international human rights standards to which El Salvador is party;

- urging the government not to approve any law which would block investigations into human rights abuses and would prevent the prosecutions of those responsible.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Lic. Alfredo Cristiani Burkard

Presidente de la República de El Salvador

Telegrams: Presidente Cristiani, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: + 503 81 00 18

Telexes: 20245 RS SAL; 20522 PRESS SAL

Salutation: Sr. Presidente

2) President of the Legislative Assembly:

Dr. Luis Roberto Angulo Samayoa

Presidente de la Asamblea Legislativa

Telegrams: Presidente Asamblea Legislativa, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: + 503 71 53 90

Telexes: 20532 CEDICESAL

Salutation: Sr. Presidente de la Asamblea Legislativa

3) National Secretary for Communications:

Lic. Ernesto Altschul

Secretario Nacional de Comunicaciones

Telegrams: Secretario Nacional de Comunicaciones Altschul, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: + 503 81 42 09

Telexes: 30344 RS SAL

Salutation: Sr. Secretario Nacional de Comunicaciones

4) Minister of Justice:

Dr. René Hernández Valiente

Ministro de Justicia

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: +503 23 26 11

Telexes: 20599

Salutation: Sr. Ministro

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Newspapers:

Diario Latino

Faxes: + 503 71 09 71

Diario El Mundo

Faxes: + 503 71 43 42

Proceso

Faxes: + 503 73 35 56

Radio station:

Radio Cadena Sonora

Faxes: + 503 26 87 43

Human Rights Organization:

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES)

Faxes: + 503 71 28 86

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador accredited to your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY TO ARRIVE IN EL SALVADOR BY THURSDAY 18 MARCH
1993**

Although we appreciate this is a really tight deadline, we would be particularly grateful if you could possibly arrange extra appeals to the following political parties represented in the Legislative Assembly. Any extra appeals would be great but to ensure that some appeals, if at all possible, are received by each party, we have suggested that the larger sections give priority to the following parties:

SECTION	POLITICAL PARTY
Canada	Partido de Conciliación Nacional (PCN) Attn: Ciro Cruz Zepeda Fax: + 503 71 3406 Salutation: Estimado Sr.
Germany and Netherlands	Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC) Attn: Fidel Chávez Mena Fax: + 503 71 2748 Salutation: Estimado Sr.
Spain and UK	Convergencia Democrática (CD) Attn: Rubén Ignacio Zamora Rivas Fax: + 503 71 0517 Salutation: Estimado Sr.
USA	Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) Attn: Mercedes Gloria Salguero Gross Fax: + 503 71 2520 Salutation: Estimado Sra.