

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 29/04/98

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 10 per section.

UA 249/98

Fear for safety

18 September 1998

EL SALVADOR Adrián Esquino Lisco, Chief and Spiritual Leader of the *Asociación Nacional Indígena Salvadoreña (ANIS)*, Salvadorean National Indigenous Association
Elba Pérez, Director of ANIS

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety while in detention of the two above-named leading members of the *Asociación Nacional Indígena Salvadoreña (ANIS)*, Salvadorean National Indigenous Association, some of whose members have, in the past, received death threats and been attacked as a result of their involvement in ANIS. There is an additional health concern for Adrián Esquino Lisco, who is diabetic.

Adrián Esquino Lisco and Elba Pérez were arrested at their homes in Sonsonate, Department of Sonsonate, by the *Policía Nacional Civil (PNC)*, National Civil Police, on 16 September 1998. They were reportedly first taken to a local detention centre and then to the Department of Santa Ana.

They have reportedly been accused of misappropriation of government property, specifically, for making use of a government building and vehicles for ANIS purposes. ANIS claims, however, that they are able to prove ownership of both the building and the vehicles.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the past, several members of ANIS, including Adrián Esquino Lisco, have received death threats and been attacked (see UA 06/96 and follow-ups). These threats are believed to be related to ongoing campaigns by ANIS to force the Salvadorean authorities to pay compensation to the victims of the Las Hojas massacre which occurred 15 years ago, and their work on issues of land ownership.

On 22 February 1983, sixteen indigenous peasants belonging to the ANIS-run Las Hojas cooperative, in the Department of Sonsonate, were detained by the Jaguar Battalion of the Salvadorean army. When Adrian Esquino enquired about their whereabouts, however, the Commander of the Military Detachment in Sonsonate, who was in charge of the operation, denied holding them. Later that morning, their bodies were found on the banks of the Cuyuapa River near the Las Hojas cooperative.

Although the army claimed that the peasants were actually guerrillas who had been killed 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 has ever been brought to justice for these crimes, nor was any compensation given to the relatives of the victims, as recommended by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in a resolution on the case issued on 24 September 1992.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Adrián Esquino Lisco and Elba Pérez on 16 September 1998 in what appears to amount to continued harassment of ANIS members;

- urging the government to ensure the safety of the two men while in custody;
- requesting information about the charges made against them;
- asking for assurances that Adrián Esquino Lisco is receiving the medication he requires for the control of his diabetes;
- reminding the government of El Salvador of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5 "no one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

APPEALS TO:

S.E. Dr Armando Calderón Sol
Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
Avda. Los Diplomáticos, B° San Jacinto
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Presidente, San Salvador, El Salvador
Faxes: (503) 281 0018
E-mail: presidente@casapres.gob.sv
Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

Lic. Mario Acosta Oertel
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Ministro Interior, San Salvador, El Salvador
Faxes: + 503 281 5959
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Eduardo Peñate Polanco
Procurador para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
9ª Av. Norte y 5º Calle Poniente, Edificio AMSA Nº 535
San Salvador, El Salvador
Faxes: + 503 271-2886
Salutation: Señor Polanco / Dear Mr Polanco

COPIES TO:

ANIS
Calle Obispo Marroquín
Oficina Antigua Aduana Férrea
Sonsonate
Tel/Faxes: + 503 451 0742

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 30 October 1998.

"No one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights