

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of torture/Legal concern

23 January 1984

EL SALVADOR: Fourteen trade unionists

Amnesty International has received reports that 14 people are being held in detention following a raid by the National Police on a trade union meeting in San Salvador on 19 January 1984. The meeting was attended by 65 people, including members of the *Asociación Cooperativista de Trabajadores Metalúrgicos de El Salvador* (ACOTRAMES – the Cooperative Association of Metal Workers of El Salvador) and members of the executive committee of the *Federación Sindical Revolucionaria* (FSR – Revolutionary Trade Union Federation).

Agents of the National Police are reported to have arrived at the building at 8.45 am saying that they had received information that a meeting of armed guerrillas was due to take place there and that a canon was hidden in the building. They then made a thorough search of the building but reportedly found no weapons. They then questioned all the people present and threatened to take them to the police station if they did not answer their questions. Photographs were taken of all those present, at least ten of each person according to one report. Everyone was held until 5.00 pm when the officer who was commanding the operation said that all could go home except the 14 people named below:

- José Jeremías PEREIRA, Secretary General of the FSR
- Ms Dinora RAMIREZ DE PEREIRA, organizational secretary of the FSR
- Herber Orlando GUEVARA ALFARO, negotiations secretary (*secretario de conflictos*) of the FSR, and secretary of Education of the *Sindicato de la Empresa Lido S.A.* (SELSA – Lido Company Trade Union)
- Oscar Orlando ROSALES ARRIOLA, Secretary of Finance of the FSR, and Secretary of Education of the *Sindicato Bancarias y Financieras* (SITRABIF – Union of Workers in Banking and Financial Institutions)
- Salvador ARANA FLORES, Secretary of Social Assistance of the FSR and Secretary of Public Relations of SELSA
- Salvador CHAVEZ (or Salvador ESCALANTE CHAVEZ), Secretary of Public Relations of FSR and Secretary General of the union at the APTOCOM Company
- César Alvaro ESCALANTE, Press Secretary of the FSR, and Secretary General of the union at the Kimberley-Clarke company
- Ms Magdalena del Carmen RIVAS VALENCIA, member of ACOTRAMES
- Oscar Armando BENAVIDES, member of ACOTRAMES
- Esteban GONZALEZ, Secretary General of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto de Vivienda Urbana*
- Mario Antonio ESCAMILLA ACOSTA, bus driver and trade unionist
- Juan José VARGAS LEMUS, member of ACOTRAMES
- Ms Amanda RAMOS DE VILLEGAS, a Salvadorian citizen resident in Mexico
- Juan Salvador RAMOS HERNANDEZ, member of ACOTRAMES

These 14 people were taken in two groups to the National Police Headquarters, one group travelling in a mustard-coloured Toyota Hi-Ace, and the other in a white Toyota Hi-Ace.

Amnesty International has also received unconfirmed reports that a Salvadorian journalist working for YSKL national radio, Raúl Beltrán, was shot dead during the raid.

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety and physical well-being of these people. It is not known whether the National Police have acknowledged their detention.

Background information

Amnesty International have been following the human rights situation in El Salvador closely for a number of years, and has concluded that the security forces have been regularly involved in a systematic and widespread program of torture, "disappearances" and individual and mass killings of men, women and children. Victims are detained by uniformed or plain clothes members of the security forces and held incommunicado in police stations, army barracks or secret detention centres. It is during the periods of incommunicado detention that prisoners are frequently subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and torture. Some are eventually released or charged and transferred to an official prison. However, thousands of others have "disappeared" over the past five years. The government has nevertheless consistently failed to bring those responsible to justice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Telegrams/express letters/airmail letters:

- expressing concern about the detention of these 14 people and asking for clarification of their present whereabouts and legal situation
- urging that they be humanely treated while in detention
- urging that they be released unless charged and brought before a court
- also expressing concern about reports that Raúl Beltrán was shot dead during the raid and asking for details of the circumstances of the killing, if these reports are correct

Please organize some appeals from TRADE UNIONISTS.

APPEALS TO:

Coronel Carlos Reynaldo López Nuila
Director General de la Policía Nacional
6a Calle Oriente
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Director of National Police)

*Telegrams to: Director General
Policia Nacional Lopez Nuila,
San Salvador, El Salvador*

General Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova
Ministro de Defensa y de Seguridad Publica
Doble Via a Santa Tecla
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Minister of Defence and Public Security)

*Telegrams to: Ministro Defensa
Vides Casanova, San Salvador,
El Salvador*

Dr. Julio Alfredo Samayoa
Ministro de Trabajo
Ministerio de Trabajo
2 Avenida Norte
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Minister of Labour)

*Telegrams to: Ministro Trabajo Samayoa,
San Salvador, El Salvador*

COPIES TO:

CDHES
Dr Benjamin Cestoni
2a Planta
Edif. Fiscalía General de la República
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador

(governmental human rights commission)

Diario El Mundo
2A Av. Norte No. 211
San Salvador, El Salvador

(newspaper)

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Check with the International Secretariat if sending appeals after 5 March 1984.