

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 135/97

Fear for safety

9 October 1997

EL SALVADOR Group of people working for justice in case of EJE victim

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of a group of people preparing an event to commemorate the first anniversary of the reported extrajudicial execution of Francisco Manzanares (see below). The commemoration is due to take place on 11 October 1997.

During the last few days the group have become aware that they seem to be under surveillance and are being followed, allegedly by members of the *Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC), National Civil Police. The same vehicles have been seen standing in front of their houses.

The group, who have asked for their names not to be made public, have been working tirelessly to prevent Francisco Manzanares' case remaining in impunity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Francisco Manzanares was killed on 8 October 1996. He had fought with the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN), Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, during the armed conflict in El Salvador, and had held important political positions in the transition period after the war when the FMLN became a political party. He participated in the 1994 presidential, legislative and municipal elections.

According to reports, Manzanares and Edgar Barahona, also a former member of the FMLN and currently in the PNC, were standing by a public telephone waiting to make a phone call when two cars (a white pick-up and a dark grey Nissan Sentra) without number plates and tinted windows appeared, and about eight heavily armed men in civilian clothes, wearing bulletproof vests and military boots got out. One of them shot Francisco Manzanares in the head just behind his right ear, at pointblank range, using an M-16 gun, loaded with explosive bullets (prohibited in El Salvador). Another took photographs from one of the cars, while a colleague filmed the scene and the witnesses on video, even entering one of the neighbouring houses and filming the inhabitants, warning them that if they testified about the incident they could be identified on film. One of the attackers was reported to have spoken into his radio and said: "Task completed" ("*Ya está hecho lo encomendado*").

Francisco Manzanares had reported to the PNC in late September 1996 that unidentified men were watching his house and asking about his activities. Police authorities claimed that Francisco Manzanares was involved in extortion and that the operation in which he was killed was part of the police investigation.

According to recent press reports, the *Juez Primero de lo Penal de San Miguel*, Judge of the Criminal Court of the First Instance, has stated that he would issue a decision on the case in the near future.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send as many telegrams/telexes/faxes as possible to arrive by 11 October, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that those involved in planning an event to commemorate Francisco Manzanares death are being followed and this is causing fear for their safety;

- calling on the authorities to call off any surveillance of those planning the commemoration, or if this has not been officially ordered, to investigate who are those carrying it out;

- pointing out that the commemorative event is a totally legal activity under international human rights instruments, as well as under the Constitution of El Salvador (Article 7 guarantees the right to free association and assembly).

APPEALS TO:

President of El Salvador

Dr. Armando Calderón Sol

Presidente de la República de El Salvador

Telegrams: Presidente Calderón, San Salvador, El Salvador

Telexes: 20245 RS SAL; 20522 PRESS SAL

Faxes: +503 271 0950

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Mario Acosta Oertel

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: +503 271 2484

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Director General of PNC

Ing. Rodrigo Ávila

Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil (PNC)

Faxes: +503 222 1981

Telegrams: Director General, Policia Nacional, San Salvador, El Salvador

Salutation: Sr Director General / Dear Director General

COPIES TO:

Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman

Dra. Victoria Marina Velásquez de Avilés

Procuradora para la defensa

de los derechos humanos de El Salvador

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and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.