

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of torture

7 April 1986

EL SALVADOR:

Salomón SANCHEZ MARTIR, aged 58, bus driver and secretary of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Nacional del Transporte, Similares y Conexos* (STINTS), Transport and Related Industries Workers' Union

Maximiliano CASTRO NAVAS, aged 34, driver and member of STINTS, married with seven children

Antonio CAMPOS MENDOZA, bus driver and negotiations officer (*secretario de conflictos*) of STINTS

Gilberto Omar LOPEZ SANCHEZ, member of STINTS

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the safety of these four trade unionists.

Salomón Sánchez Martir was taken into custody on 3 April 1986 by plain clothes agents of the National Guard. Maximiliano Castro Navas was detained on 2 April 1986 in the capital, San Salvador. Antonio Campos Mendoza is reported to have been detained on 4 April 1986 by men in plain clothes driving a white pick-up truck. Gilberto Omar López Sánchez is reported to have been detained on about 19 March 1986 at his place of work (the Salvadorian Urban Bus Company – route 11) in San Salvador by members of the National Guard.

These four men are all reported to be held under investigation at the National Guard Headquarters in San Salvador. Gilberto Omar López Sánchez is reported to have been tortured; his clothes, soaked in blood, have been handed over to his family. There are fears that the other three may also be tortured.

The homes of all four trade unionists are reported to have been searched by the National Guard and their families threatened.

A fifth trade unionist, Vicente Alfredo Beltrán, secretary of the *Sindicato de Empresa Trabajadores del Instituto de Vivienda Urbana* (SETIVU), Unión of the Institute for Urban Housing Workers, was detained in San Salvador on 22 March 1986 by members of the National Police. He was subsequently released on 1 April 1986. He is said to have been tortured.

The charges against the four men are not yet known. They are being held under the provisions of Decree Law 50 which was promulgated in February 1984. Under this law, suspects may be held in incommunicado detention for up to 15 days before being brought before a military examining magistrate. It is during this period that torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are frequently reported to occur.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Maximiliano Castro Navas and Salomón Sánchez Martir have been detained on two previous occasions: once in April 1978 when they were held for 19 days and again in March 1979 when they were released after four days. Maximiliano Castro Navas was detained for a third time in August 1982 together with five other members of STINTS, accused of storing communist propaganda in the headquarters of their trade union. Four of them, including Maximiliano Castro Navas were released shortly afterwards; the other two were transferred to La Esperanza men's prison. Antonio Campos Mendoza had previously been detained on about 26 August 1985 by the Treasury Police (*Policia de Hacienda*) until his release, apparently without charge, on 9 September 1985.

The detentions of these trade unionists are the latest in what appears to be a renewed wave of human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, "disappearance", torture and extrajudicial execution, directed at Salvadorian trade unionists who have, in strikes and demonstrations, protested against dismissals of striking trade unionists and what the unions consider to be the government's failure to improve basic living conditions. They have also demanded wage increases, the abolition of the state

of siege (re-imposed regularly since it was first declared in March 1980), the re-appearance of “disappeared” trade unionists, investigations into the killing of several of their members and the release of others.

(In January 1986 Amnesty International issued a circular detailing human rights abuses directed at Salvadorian trade unionists – AMR 29/06/86.)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express letters/airmail letters:

- urging that Salomón Sánchez Martir, Maximiliano Castro Navas, Antonio Campos Mendoza and Gilberto López Sánchez be released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence
- if charged, urging that internationally recognized standards for a fair trial be adhered to and that they be allowed immediate access to an independent lawyers of their choice
- expressing concern about reports that Antonio Campos Mendoza has been tortured while in the custody of the National Guard, urging an investigation into these reports and that those found responsible be brought to justice; urging that he receive all necessary medical treatment
- urging that all four men be humanely treated while in detention

APPEALS TO:

Exmo. Sr. José Napoléon Duarte
Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Sr. Colonel Napoleón Aristides Montes
Director General de la Guardia Nacional
Carretera Troncal del Norte
San Salvador, El Salvador

*Telegrams to: Presidente Duarte,
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telex: 20644 re sal*

*Telegrams to: Director Guardia Nacional,
San Salvador, El Salvador*

Dr Miguel Alejandro Gallegos
Ministro de Trabajo y Previsión Social
Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social
2a Avenida Norte 428
San Salvador, El Salvador

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

COPIES TO:
Dr. Julio Alfredo Samayoa
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
3a Av. Norte y 11ª Calle Poniente
San Salvador, El Salvador

CDH
Dr Benjamin Cestoni
2a Planta
Edif. Fiscalía General de la República
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador
(governmental human rights commission)

Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores
Salvadoreños (FENESTRAS)
Av. 29 Agosto
Plaza Barrios, 2 piso No. 29
San Salvador, El Salvador
*(National Trade Union Federation of Salvadorian
Workers)*

and to Salvadorian diplomatic representatives in your country.

Please organize some appeals from TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Please check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 May 1986