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HONDURAN GOVERNMENT'S REPORT ON "DISAPPEARANCES": A "CRACK IN THE WALL OF SILENCE AND INDIFFERENCE"

A recent government report has confirmed what Amnesty International and human rights groups in Honduras have been claiming for years: that government forces were involved in the "systematic, clandestine and organized" practice of "disappearance" throughout the 1980s.

The preliminary report, published on 29 December by the **Comisionado Nacional para la Protección de los Derechos Humanos**, National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights, Dr. Leo Valladares Lanza, implicates former and current military and civilian officials in the "disappearance" of 184 individuals suspected of links with armed opposition groups. Most of the "disappearances" occurred between 1981 and 1984.

The report, entitled **The Facts Speak for Themselves**, ends over a decade of denials and inaction by successive governments over the issue of the "disappeared" - a response described by the victims' relatives as "a wall of silence and indifference".

Among the officials cited in the report for their responsibility are two former presidents and the current head of the armed forces. It also states that military advisers from the United States and Argentina were involved in these crimes.

Although Amnesty International has not received the full text of the report, it views the Commissioner's investigation as a positive step towards justice for these crimes - justice which is long-overdue. Amnesty International welcomes the Commissioner's recommendation that those named in the report be brought before the courts with a view to punishing those responsible. Amnesty International also supports the Commissioner's call for efforts to locate clandestine cemeteries where the "disappeared" are alleged to be buried, and for the disclosure of military archives relating to military counterinsurgency operations.

Such measures are urgently required to help put an end to the impunity with which the Honduran military has continued to this day to commit grave human rights violations, including political killings and torture.

Amnesty International will continue to call on the government of President Callejas, as well as the incoming government of President-elect Carlos Roberto Reina, due to take office on 27 January, to: initiate judicial investigations into the Commissioner's findings before civilian courts; suspend those military and civilian officials named in the report pending their prosecution; and bring those found responsible to justice.

Amnesty International is also calling for steps to be taken to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the victims and to compensate their relatives. The organization considers that those responsible for recent human rights violations should be brought to justice, as an essential safeguard to prevent the recurrence of human rights violations under the new administration.

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