

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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"Disappearance"

19 July 1988

EL SALVADOR: Eliseo CORDOVA AGUILAR

Amnesty International is concerned at the reported abduction and subsequent "disappearance" of trade unionist Eliseo Cordova Aguilar.

On 12 July 1988, Eliseo Cordova Aguilar, ex-Secretary (*secretario de actas*) and vice-president of the Cooperative of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social* (STISSS), Union of Workers of the Salvadorian Institute of Social Security, was abducted at 8.00 pm near his home in the Reparto Llano Verde, jurisdiction of Ilopango, San Salvador department. Abducted with him were lawyer, Dr. Celestino Hernández, and a woman (unnamed). The abduction was carried out by two armed men in plain clothes, wearing hoods, who took all three away in Eliseo Cordova's car. The car was driven by the assailants to the canton (hamlet) of El Estino, San Martin, Cuzcatlan, where the lawyer and the woman were released and Eliseo Cordova transferred to another vehicle, which drove off to an unknown destination.

On hearing about the abduction of her husband the wife of Dr. Celestino Hernández went to Policia de Hacienda (treasury Police) headquarters in the capital San Salvador to inquire into the whereabouts of her husband. She reports that when she returned to Ilopango she was followed by two men who approached her and identified themselves as members of the Treasury Police, who she later stated told her not to worry that they were only interested in Eliseo Cordova and that her husband would be released.

The two people abducted with Eliseo Cordova subsequently stated that the abductors questioned Eliseo about his trade union activities and referred to his involvement in the STISSS strike of last year. The family believe that Eliseo Cordova's abduction was carried out by the security forces, because of his trade union activity.

A writ of *habeas corpus* was submitted by the family to the security forces on 13 July, but no reply has been received. Amnesty International is concerned that he may have "disappeared".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Salvadorian Code of Penal Procedure, which is now in force, limits administrative detention to 72 hours. However detainees and human rights monitoring organizations continue to report that suspects are held incommunicado for extended periods in military and security force detention centres, which Amnesty International fears facilitates human rights violations such as torture and "disappearance".

Amnesty International is also seriously concerned at the increase of killings attributed to so-called "death squads" and has concluded that these "death squads" are customarily made up of regular police and military officers.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telexes/telegrams/express letters/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the abduction and subsequent "disappearance" of trade unionist Eliseo Cordova, reportedly carried out by members of the security forces;
- asking that his whereabouts be made known and that he be treated humanely while in custody;
- urging that he be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or released.

APPEALS TO:

S.E. José Napoleón Duarte
Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Presidente Duarte,
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telexes: 20245 RES SAL;
20445 CGFA SAL; 20522

Senor Vice-Ministro de Defensa y de Seguridad
Pública
Ministerio de Defensa y de Seguridad Pública
Doble Via a Santa Tecla
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Deputy minister of Defence and Public
Security; in charge of Treasury Police,
National Guard and National Police)

Telegrams: Vice Ministro Defensa
San Salvador, El Salvador

Cor. Leopoldo Hernández
Director General de la Policía de Hacienda
Calle Concepción
San Salvador, El Salvador

(Treasury Police)
Telegrams: Director General Policía
Hernandez
San Salvador, El Salvador

Dr. Lázaro Tadeo Lizama
Ministro de Trabajo y Previsión Social
Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social
2a Av. Norte 428
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Ministro de Trabajo y
Previsión Social Lizama,
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telex: 20016 TRABSALVA

COPIES TO:

- Monsenor Arturo Rivara y Damas, Arzobispo, Arzobispado de San Salvador,
Apdo. 01-126 San Salvador, El Salvador (Archbishop)
- Señores, 17 Calle Oriente No. 121, San Miguelito, San Salvador, El Salvador
(UNTS), National Union of Salvadorian Workers (Labour Coalition)
- Lic. Benjamin Cestoni Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador,
Gubernamental (CDH), 29 Av. Norte No. 1004, San Salvador, El Salvador
(governmental Human Rights Commission)
- and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Please check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 August 1988.