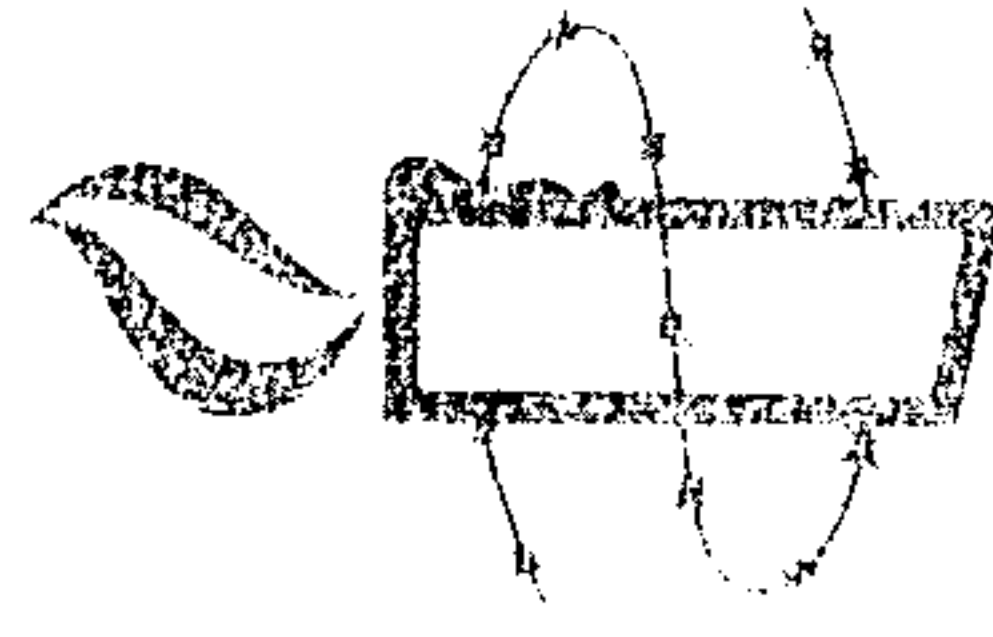
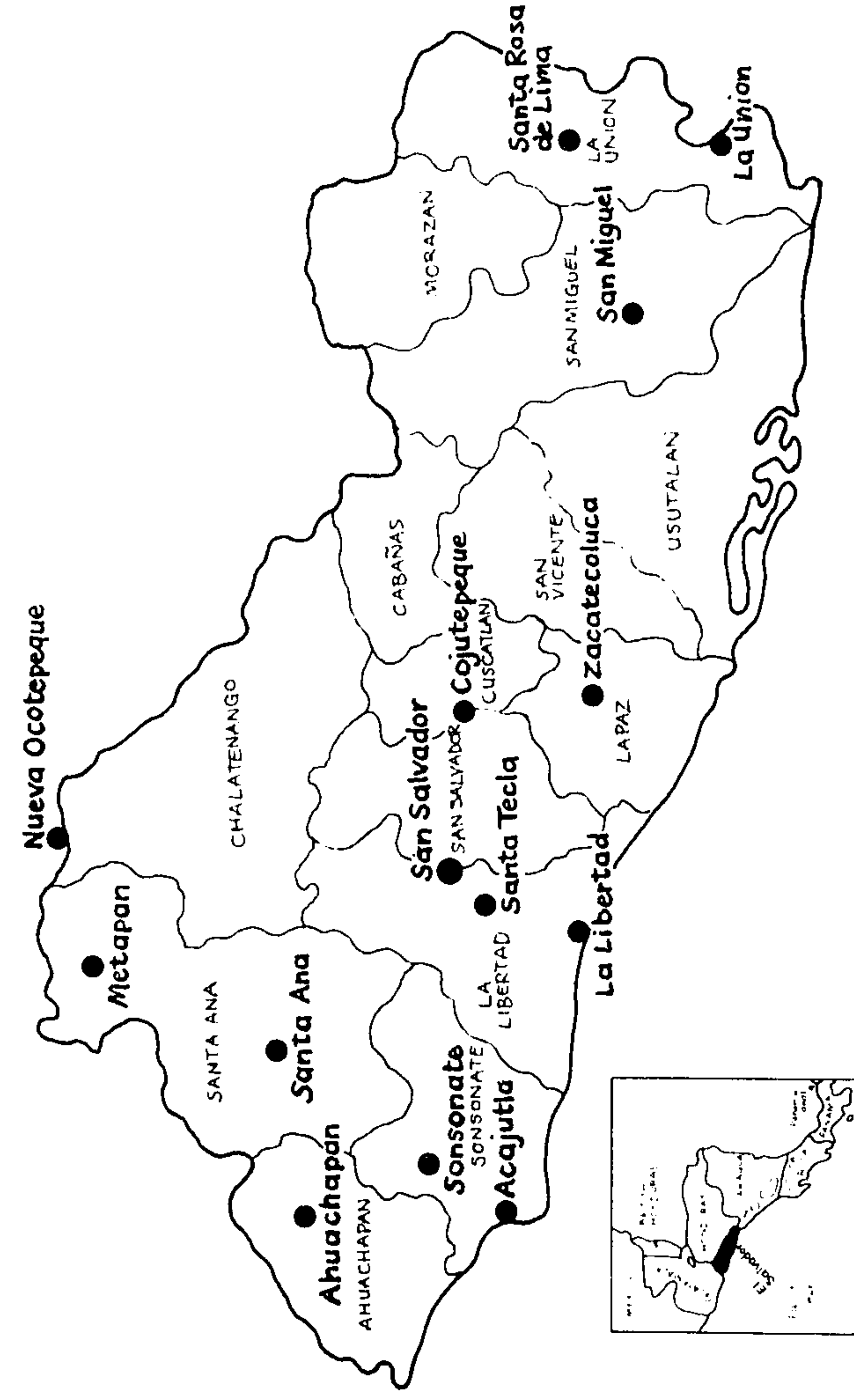




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amnesty international El Salvador Campaign



Felipe Salinas is a peasant farmer and lay preacher in the village of La Finquita in Comasagua, El Salvador. He was detained at his home by National Guard troops on 5 March 1977 and was stripped and severely beaten while questioned about his activities and those of the parish priest. He was taken several miles from the village and was dressed in a red robe and a paper crown. A wooden cross was tied to his back. He was found, still bound, by villagers several hours later, unconscious by the roadside.

Felipe Salinas was again detained and interrogated on 16 March 1977 when he was cut on both arms, kicked and beaten, and his mouth filled with mud and urine. He was again freed by local peasants after being left bound in an isolated place. His National Guard captors warned him that the next time he was detained he would be murdered.

Many people have been murdered in El Salvador. Amnesty International's El Salvador campaign is to highlight human rights violations there, and to

call for an immediate improvement in the situation.

In June 1978 El Salvador ratified the American Convention on Human Rights, placing the government of El Salvador under international obligation to promote and observe the basic rights of man. Under the American Convention the government of El Salvador pledges to observe certain guarantees which under no circumstances may be suspended.

Article 4: THE RIGHT TO LIFE

"Every person has the right to have his life respected. This right shall be protected by law... No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life."

The right to life has been systematically violated under the government of President Carlos Romero. Peasant leaders and those in opposition have been detained by security forces and later found mutilated and murdered. Many others who are detained "disappear", their arrests never recognised by the government. Victims are mainly peasant farmers, rural community leaders and lay Roman Catholic catechists; most are associated with rural labour federations.

In February 1978 Amnesty International presented documentation to President Romero on 62 detentions followed by "disappearance" and 30 murders after detention. Most of the dead and disappeared were peasant farmers. Bodies of murdered prisoners were found with signs of torture. Some had been decapitated, had limbs amputated or were severely disfigured.

No response has been received from President Romero to Amnesty's inquiry into the 92 cases. Some of the 62 missing prisoners may remain in detention in secret windowless cells on the third floor of the capital city's National Guard headquarters, or in the barracks of the National Police and the Customs Police. Some may lie murdered in unmarked graves.

Article 5: THE RIGHT TO HUMAN TREATMENT

"Every person has the right to have his physical, mental and moral integrity respected... No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment. All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person."

In November 1977 the "Law in Defence and Guarantee of Public Order" (*Ley de Defensa y Garantía de Orden Pública*) was introduced, ostensibly to help combat terrorism. Left-wing guerrilla activities had developed, involving kidnappings and armed attacks on the security forces. Whatever its effectiveness in this direction, the law restricts the activities of opposition political parties and trade unions, both rural and urban. Under its clauses public meetings have been attacked. Opposition communiques have been censored, union strike action banned and union leaders arrested and prosecuted.

The freedom of Salvadorean citizens to monitor human rights violations and inform national and international bodies and the foreign news media is affected by a section of the law which provides for up to three years' imprisonment. The conscience of any journalist - or concerned citizen - can therefore be held hostage to such a law. The right to humane treatment has been systematically violated under the government of President Carlos Romero. Prisoners released after long periods of secret incommunicado imprisonment - illegal under Salvadorean law - report prolonged and systematic beatings. Victims who have made such reports include Roman Catholic priests detained for interrogation about their contact with peasant organisations.

Article 12: THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION

"Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and religion. This includes freedom to maintain or change one's religion or beliefs, and to profess or disseminate one's religion or beliefs, either individually or together with others, in public or in private."

The abduction and disappearance, torture and murder of Salvadoreans by government forces relates directly to the exercising of freedom of conscience by those who suffer such abuses. The victims are primarily peasant farmers, but industrial trade unionists, political and religious leaders, students and teachers also suffer.

While abduction and disappearance, torture and murder by security forces is clearly illegal under domestic Salvadorean law, new domestic legislation provides for the lawful detention of those who, without violence, exercise their freedom of conscience. Such detention is in contravention of the American Convention on Human Rights.

The new public order law can be applied to the Roman Catholic clergy who "abuse" their clerical status by promoting social justice and human rights - sentences of up to five years' imprisonment are provided for. Roman Catholic church sources in El Salvador documented 716 detentions under the Public Order Law up to 9 July 1978. At the end of July 1978 64 prisoners were awaiting trial under the new law, and 2 of the detainees had not been acknowledged in detention. Most of those detained were trade unionists.

While earlier legislation effectively prohibited strike action (there have reportedly only been two official strikes since 1950), the Public Order Law provides for five years' imprisonment for participants or leaders of strikes and stoppages "or any other act or omission that has as its intent the alteration of the normal development of the productive activities of the nation." There have been no "legal" strikes since the promulgation of the new law.

Persecution of the Church

"Whenever the church has worked for a more just society, the reaction has been quite similar: those in power turn against these Christians, and people have been killed, have disappeared, have been expelled and threatened. Just as injustice is quite concrete, promoting justice has to be concrete also," said Father Rutilio Grande of the rural district of Aguilares, in his sermon of 13 February 1977. A month later, on March 12, he and two of his parishioners were killed in a burst of sub-machine gun fire.

The murder of Father Rutilio Grande was part of a campaign of violence against the Roman Catholic Church of El Salvador, which was precipitated by the assistance given by members of the clergy to peasant federations active in demanding an equitable share of land and opportunity. (The majority of the population in El Salvador are landless peasants and over 80% of their children suffer from severe malnutrition).

The wave of violence gained international prominence on 21 June 1977 when a right-wing terrorist group which called itself the White Warriors' Union (Union Guerrera Blanca) threatened to "execute" all of the 47 Jesuit priests in El Salvador if they did not leave the country before 20 July. By that time, the Jesuit-run Catholic University had been bombed six times, seven foreign-born priests had been expelled by force, three priests had been detained and tortured and two Salvadoran priests - one of them Rutilio Grande - had been murdered.

Appeals on behalf of the threatened Jesuit priests were sent from all over the world to General Carlos Humberto Romero, as he took office as president on 1 July 1977.

Repression of trade unionists

Trade unions of any kind were illegal in El Salvador until 1950. Federations of trade unions were banned until 1963 and there is no central confederation of labour. Even today only a small part of the industrial work force have had their union organisations legally recognised. All unions of agricultural workers remain formally banned by law. The peasant unions that now exist are illegal organisations.

Peasant unions were first formed at the end of the 1960s, with some assistance from the Salvadoran Roman Catholic Church. In recent years the two principal unions of rural workers, FECCAS (The Christian Peasant Federation) and UTC (The Union of Rural Workers), have grown considerably and have become increasingly militant in their demands for agrarian reform. FECCAS and UTC have, despite their illegal status, joined with unions of teachers, students and shanty-town dwellers to form a political coalition, the People's Revolutionary Block (BPR) to further their common interests.

An earlier experience of peasant organisation remains in the memories of the Salvadoran military and the plantation owners. In 1932, following the collapse of the international coffee market, landless peasants expelled from the coffee plantations revolted. The revolt was crushed within 48 hours, but an estimated 30,000 peasants died in ensuing weeks (three per cent of the total population at that time). After 1932, peasant organisations were banned by law.

The spectre of 1932 continues to haunt the authorities. Today the most serious and brutal repression of workers and trade unionists in El Salvador still occurs in rural areas against landless labourers and peasants on the coffee, sugar and cotton plantations.

Church leaders from different countries and denominations condemned the campaign of violence.

In a public statement on 8 July 1977 Archbishop Joseph L. Bernadin, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, said: "The lines have been sharply etched in El Salvador, with the landless peasants and ministers of the Church on one side and the national security forces and the landed oligarchy on the other... In few other countries today has the Church's pastoral ministry been met with such intense and organised opposition... The tiny minority of rich and powerful, zealous guardians of a sterile and unjust status quo, have not hesitated to employ every means at their disposal to obstruct the preaching of the Gospel."

With the support of world opinion, firm in their convictions, and responding to the faith of thousands of peasant farmers in their parishes, the Jesuit priests chose to stay in El Salvador. The faith of the people was clearly demonstrated when, following the murder of Rutilio Grande, 1000,000 attended a mass celebrated in his memory. Thousands more were turned back by government troops.

The international outcry succeeded in protecting the lives of the threatened priests and since then violence against the clergy has declined. However, the lay religious, catechists and lay preachers have continued to suffer detention, torture and murder - particularly murder.

In August 1977 two lay preachers in the village of El Salitre were killed after arrest by some sixty uniformed members of the National

Guard and Hacienda Guard. Witnesses who saw the body of Felipe Jesus Chacon Vasquez said it was nearly unrecognisable, as "they cut the scalp from his head and stripped the flesh from his face." The other victim, Serafin Vasquez, was hacked to death with machetes. Both men were well-known leaders of the "Cursillista Movement", a conservative lay catholic movement with many distinguished members from business and government circles.

In October 1977, Antonio Rivera Orellana, a Roman Catholic catechist, was detained by the National Guard and has since "disappeared". Witnesses to the arrest named the commander of the National Guard patrol as Corporal Hector Lorenzana Olmos and the arrest was publicised in Diario El Grafico.

Roman Catholic parish priest Father Miguel Angel Ventura, and the sacristan of the church in Osicala in rural Morazan department were detained on 4 November 1977 and tortured in the church itself by National Guard troops investigating peasant organisations. They were stripped and suspended by their arms while systematically beaten. Both were eventually released. Father Rafael Barahona, a priest who assisted peasant organisations, was detained on 21 February 1977 and nearly died of a fractured skull after interrogation by the National Guard.

The link between the Church in El Salvador and the peasantry is strong: the clergy are active in supporting a doctrine of social justice on behalf of the rural poor.

Following the death of Father Grande, the Aguilares area remained a centre of peasant organisation, and on 17 May some 2,000 army and National Guard troops occupied the area. They moved first to "El Paisnal", and

carried out and the homes of some members of peasant organisations were burned and possessions confiscated. Of sixty-eight peasant farmers arrested - all members of peasant unions - twenty-two remain unaccounted for, their whereabouts unknown.

It is not only workers and trade unionists in the countryside that are subjected to repression.

Industrial trade union leaders in El Salvador told North American investigators in January 1978 that there had been a general deterioration in the respect for human and trade union rights during the first six months of the Romero regime. In this same period, Amnesty International documented cases of imprisoned trade unionists from the textile, construction, manufacturing and bakery industries as well as from unions of civil servants, including the teachers' union, ANDES. These trade union leaders claimed that over 500 unionists had been imprisoned for union activity during the previous two years.

While arrests have been made for participation in strike action, including some 150 workers of the Izalco sugar mill in February 1978 (17 of whom remain in detention), other unionists have been detained for possession of "subversive" literature.

Prof. Pedro BRAN Secretary General of the teachers' union, ANDES, is just one of many trade unionists now facing trial for the possession of "subversive" literature: he and two other teachers were detained on 28 July 1978 at their union headquarters. Two young women, Cruz Grande Tejada and Carmen Calderon Acosta, were detained during a mass in a rural church and accused of

meeting of peasant farmers in the hamlet Canton "La Esperanza" was attacked by some thirty members of the local government organisation ORDEN, some of whom have been identified by name. One man was wounded by gunfire from the ORDEN group, but Transito Vasquez, a regional leader of the Federacion Campesina Cristiana de El Salvador (FECCAS) was detained and taken away.

The body of Transito Vasquez was found the following morning, headless and with the marks of torture. His head was hung from a tree branch, as if looking down on the body.

In the following week at least fourteen other FECCAS members were murdered by ORDEN members in the same area - the country (municipio) of San Pedro Perulapan, east of San Salvador. Justo Rufino Mendoza and Alejandro Vivas, both of "Ia Esperanza", were detained, tortured and decapitated, as was Isabel Garcia Ramirez of nearby Canton "El Rodeo". Seventeen-year-old Rufino Matias of Canton "El Paraiso" was shot dead after detention and torture.

Following threats of reprisals on ORDEN by FECCAS members, hundreds of troops of the National Guard came to the San Pedro Perulapan area. The Minister of Defence, and the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces were present in the area on 27 May 1978. House-to-house searches were

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evicted peasants from lands previously sharecropped on the Hacienda San Francisco. The houses of the peasants were burned.

Troops then carried out house-to-house searches throughout the area. More than fifty peasant farmers were reported shot in cold blood by troops, and several hundred "disappeared" after being taken from the area in army trucks.

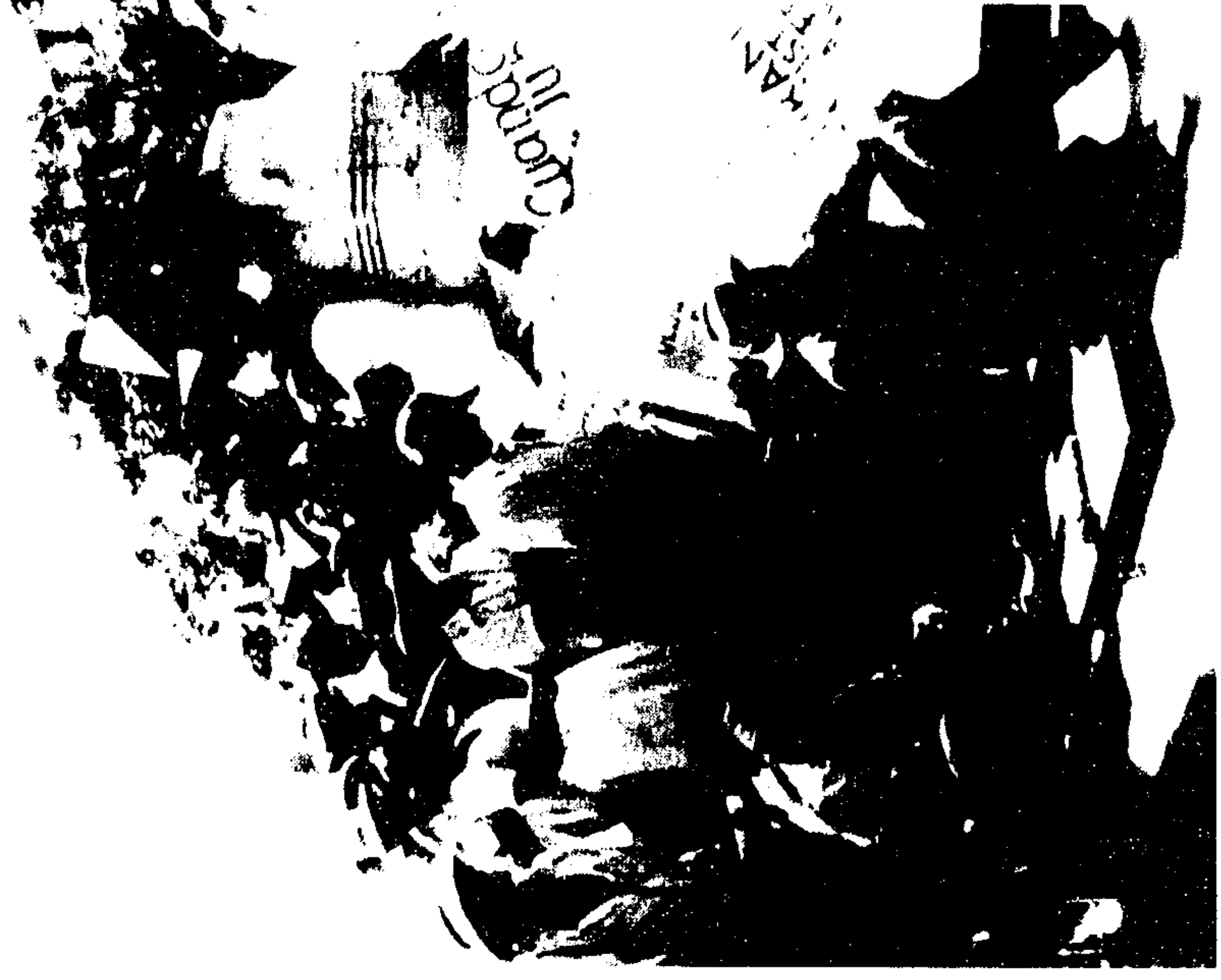
Peasants were detained, tortured, or murdered, in some cases because possession of photographs of Father Rutilio Grande was taken as evidence of "subversion". Photographs of Father Grande were distributed in thousands by the Church and the peasant federations after his murder and were placed in household shrines as objects of veneration.



Father Rutilio Grande S.J.



Children in a Salvadorian shanty-town



Part of a demonstration by the Popular Revolutionary Bloc, 1977

distributing literature from the peasant unions FECCAS and UTC (they are now held in Santa Ana Penitentiary awaiting trial). Both were allegedly tortured.

JULIAN MEJIA ARDON

A peasant farmer, was detained on 3 March 1978 in Cerron Grande, accused of distributing "propaganda" of the peasant unions FECCAS and UTC. He awaits trial under the Public Order Law in the San Salvador 1st Criminal Court. He is held in the Penitentiary at Santa Ana.

ELIAS EUGENIO LOPEZ MARROQUIN and
CARLOS FERNANDO CALONA

Bakers, detained for participation in an illegal strike by bakery workers at Izalco on 30 March 1978, are to be tried before the San Salvador 1st Criminal Court. Both are held in the Penitentiary at Santa Ana.

Margarito de Jesus VASQUEZ

A leader of the Union of Textile Workers of the factory INCA in San Salvador, was detained on 22 June 1978, presumably for his trade union work. By 2 July the authorities had not acknowledged the detention.

Justa del Carmen ABREGO

A sixty-year-old peasant woman, was detained by the National Guard in Azacualpa, Department of Cananas, on 8 April 1978. She awaits trial in San Salvador, charged with being a member of FECCAS-UTC. She is at the moment held in the jail at Ilobasco.



Peasants demonstrate how they were tied up during a spring 1978 military operation (above and below)



Amnesty International concerns in El Salvador are:

- the increasing number of disappearances, torture and summary executions of peasant farmers.
- that the public order law provides a legal basis for the detention of prisoners of conscience and may inhibit the reporting of human rights violations to national and international bodies.
- that to date the government has not carried out official investigations into reports of cold-blooded killings and brutality in rural areas.

If you want further information or to be involved with other aspects of the El Salvador Campaign or in Amnesty's work in general, please write or fill in the form below and send it to Amnesty International, British Section, Tower House, 8-14 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF.

- I wish to become an individual member of AI and enclose a cheque/postal order for 15.00 (claimants, students, OAPS 12.50).
- I also wish to receive general information about AI.
- I wish to be further involved in the El Salvador Campaign.

Name and address

What you can do

WRITE to President Carlos Humberto Romero, Palacio Presidencial, San Salvador, El Salvador, Central America, urging that his government:

- halt the persecution of urban workers and peasant farmers and their labour and religious leaders.
- publish the whereabouts of over 200 disappeared people.
- abolish torture and arbitrary detention without trial.
- observe human rights guaranteed by international agreements to which El Salvador is bound by law.
- grant permission for the return of expelled clergy.
- end immunity from lawful prosecution for members of the government organisation ORDEN and security forces who commit murder.

WRITE to the head office of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Piazza San Calisto 16, 00153 Rome, Italy, expressing your support for the work of the Roman Catholic Church in El Salvador in the field of promotion of and respect for human rights.

ASK your union branch or your national trade union to publicise oppression of workers in El Salvador and send appeals to the president of the country.

YOUR PROTEST IS OF VALUE

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is an international human rights organisation which campaigns for the release of Prisoners of Conscience, provided they have not used or advocated violence, throughout the world, from El Salvador to the USSR, from South Africa to Indonesia. 116 countries are listed in Amnesty International's last Annual Report. Of the figure of 500,000, which is Amnesty International's estimate of prisoners of conscience detained at any one time, 1,500 (approximately) were released in 1977. Much of the pressure for their release came from Amnesty International with its 34 National Sections and members in 70 countries, and 2,000 groups throughout the world.