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@TORTURE AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES CONTINUE IN HONDURAS.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SAYS.

Torture and other serious human rights abuses are still being committed with impunity by the security forces in Honduras, despite government pledges to end such practices, Amnesty International said today.

"The fact that such serious human rights violations, including torture and killings, are continuing shows the urgent need for effective measures to end unlawful practices by the police and military," the organization said.

In its latest report on Honduras, the worldwide human rights organization documents dozens of cases of alleged torture or ill-treatment, most of which occurred when people were being held illegally in prolonged incommunicado detention.

"Detainees have suffered near-suffocation by the *capucha* (a rubber hood sometimes coated with lime) and been subjected to beatings on different parts of the body while tightly handcuffed and often blindfolded. "Some have been given electric shocks, suspended by the wrists or feet, or subjected to mock executions," Amnesty International said.

Political detainees, peasants involved in land disputes and criminal suspects are among those who have been subjected to such abuses.

"I heard [someone] open an automatic knife and felt the edge of the metal blade on my throat," said Victor Ramirez, a political detainee arrested by police on 22 February 1991. "Someone sprayed a liquid on the blindfold covering my eyes and I began to hallucinate."

The same month a 34-year-old woman held for five days by the police also reported being tortured. "They put the *capucha* on my head three times causing asphyxiation and I fainted each time," she said. "Then...one of the policemen pushed down with his foot on my knees causing great pain. I begged them for mercy...shouting at them in despair that I was mother and father to five children."

The organization's new report shows that the number of "disappearances" and political killings by army "death squads" has declined considerably since the early 1980s, and no new "disappearances" have been reported to Amnesty International since the present government of President Callejas came to office in January 1990.

Nevertheless, there have been continuing allegations of physical assaults, death threats and other forms of harassment attributed to undercover groups, directed mainly at members of human rights groups, trade unions and other grassroots organizations.

There have also been a number of killings in circumstances suggesting the participation of official military or police agents or groups acting with their acquiescence.

The May 1991 killings by military personnel and men in plain clothes of five peasants involved in a land dispute highlights the need for urgent measures to end human rights violations.

"The government condemned these murders and said it will punish those responsible," Amnesty International said. "In practice, however, the authorities have persistently failed to hold the police and military accountable for their actions -- they have not brought the

perpetrators of abuses to justice. It must show its security officials that torture and other abuses are crimes and will not be tolerated."

Amnesty International called on the government to implement a series of measures to protect human rights, including the enforcement of strict time limits under Honduran law within which detainees must be taken before a judge.

The organization also repeated its call to the government to investigate the fate of more than 100 people who "disappeared" after their abduction by the security forces in the 1980s. It said that the failure of the authorities to provide information about investigations into these cases, which were announced in December 1990, cast doubt on their commitment to clarify the fate of the "disappeared". The organization said, for example, that it was unclear whether the investigations had even been set up.

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