

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Please bring this action to the attention of the person responsible for trade union outreach in your section

UA 276/92

Possible Extrajudicial Executions/
Death Threats

3 September 1992

EL SALVADOR:	José Alejandro JACO PEREZ	trade unionist
	Salvador Iván RAMIREZ	trade unionist
	Miguel Angel ALVARENGA	trade unionist
	Mario VALIENTE	trade unionist
	Juan MANGANDI	trade unionist

Amnesty International is concerned that several trade union activists in El Salvador have been targets of killings and death threats. While neither the identity nor the motive of the perpetrators is clear, the pattern of killings of trade unionists involved in labour disputes and the failure of the authorities to investigate them thoroughly, suggests the involvement of government forces, or agents acting with their complicity.

José Alejandro Jaco Perez, Conflicts Secretary of the Asociacion de Trabajadores del Ministerio de Obras Públicas (ATMOP), the Association of Workers of the Ministry of Public Works, was shot dead in front of his family on 3 August 1992 by three armed men in civilian clothing who broke into his Santa Ana home. The assailants allegedly attempted to steal certain items from the house, including documents relating to his trade union activities. This has led trade union sources to conclude that this may have been a politically motivated attack disguised as an act of common criminality. They also claim that in previous weeks José Alejandro Jaco Pérez had received threats from local authority officials in Santa Ana following a labour dispute over wage increases in which he had been active.

Salvador Iván Ramírez, First Conflicts Secretary for the Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (FENASTRAS), the National Trade Union Federation of Salvadorian Workers, was shot dead by unidentified men on 31 July 1992 in a restaurant in San Salvador (refer to UA 260/92, 7 August 1992). The Comisión Investigadora de Hechos Delictivos (CIDH), the governmental criminal investigation commission, has publicly implicated another trade unionist in the killing, although to date this suspect has not been detained. However, the testimony of witnesses and other circumstantial evidence appears to refute the CIDH's version that the killing was the result of a personal dispute. Salvador Iván Ramírez had received repeated death threats after resuming his trade union activity on his return from exile in 1991.

Miguel Angel Alvarenga, Conflicts Secretary for the Sindicato de la Industria Turística, Gastronómica y Actividades Similares y Conexas (STITGASC), the Union of Tourist, Gastronomic and Related Industries, and former member of the FENASTRAS directorate, went missing on 17 July 1992. His body was found three days later dumped in a barrel on the road to Apulo, Ilopango. Miguel Angel Alvarenga appears to have been killed in his home, where there were

bloodstains and signs of struggle. Initial investigations by the CIDH suggested the killing may have been the work of an Air Force bodyguard acting in collusion with Miguel Angel Alvarenga's wife, but may not have been politically motivated. The whereabouts of both suspects is unknown. However, FENASTRAS leaders have criticised the CIDH's propensity to categorize this and other recent killings as common crimes, as they believe that the killing is part of a covert campaign by sectors within the Armed Forces to launch a "dirty war" against government opponents.

Amnesty International has also received reports that at least another five trade unionists have been murdered in the last month, mostly in the west of the country. The organization is seeking further information regarding the circumstances of the killings.

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Other prominent trade union activists involved in recent labour disputes have received death threats. **Juan Mangandi, Mario Valiente** and three other members of the executive council (*consejo ejecutivo*) of the Asociación Salvadoreña de Trabajadores de Telecomunicaciones (ASTTEL), the Salvadorian Association of Telecommunications Workers, received anonymous death threats in early August following a labour conflict between the union and management. ASTTEL denounced the threats formally to the authorities, but no steps have been taken to identify those responsible.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Throughout the 12 years of armed conflict between the government and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), trade union members suspected of links with the FMLN have been prime targets of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances" and torture by the Salvadorian armed forces and "death squads" created by or linked to them.

In January 1992 the government and the FMLN signed a peace accord which included agreements to implement a wide range of reforms and to create new mechanisms for human rights protection. However human rights violations have continued since the signing of the peace, including unclarified "death squad"-style killings and death threats against trade unionists and other government critics.

A series of recent strikes in protest at the government's economic programme and delays in implementing agreed economic reforms have led to public accusations by the authorities that certain trade unions are fomenting unrest and jeopardising the peace process. With industrial action continuing over the government's privatization and taxation measures, trade union activists fear that threats and killings will recur.

Although the above incidents have been reported to the authorities, as well as to the human rights division of the **United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL)**, the Salvadorian authorities have routinely failed to investigate such cases effectively. AI believes that the failure to identify and punish those responsible for human rights violations is a key contributory factor to their continuation and undermines the effectiveness of other human rights-related reforms resulting from the peace accords.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the recent spate of killings of trade unionists, including José Alejandro Jaco Pérez, Salvador Iván Ramírez and Miguel Angel Alvarenga;
- calling on the appropriate authorities to carry out an immediate and thorough investigation into these killings which will result in the bringing to justice of those responsible;
- urging that all appropriate measures be taken to guarantee the safety of Juan Mangandi, Mario Valiente and other trade unionists who have received death threats, and that trade unionists in El Salvador be permitted to carry out their trade union activities without threat to their security;
- stressing your belief that human rights violations, which have continued since the peace accord, can only be eradicated if effective human rights reforms are implemented in practice

and if perpetrators of human rights violations are held to account for their acts.

APPEALS TO:

1. President

S.E. Alfredo Cristiani Burkard

Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telexes: 20245 RS SAL

Faxes: (503) 71 09 50; 79 34 01

Salutation: Sr Presidente / Dear President

2. Foreign Minister

Sr. José Manuel Pacas Castro

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Bld. Manuel Enrique Araujo km6
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telexes: 20179 RREE SAL

Faxes: (503) 98 17 74

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

3. Minister of Labour and Social Security

Sr. Mauricio González Dubón

Ministro de Trabajo y Previsión Social

Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social
2a avenida Norte 428
San Salvador, El Salvador

Telexes: 20016 TRABSALVA

Faxes: (503) 79 08 77

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

4. Human Rights Procurator

Dr. Carlos Molina Fonseca

Procurador Nacional de Derechos Humanos
Procuraduría General de la República
13a C.Poniente, Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador

Salutation: Sr Procurador / Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

National Trade Union Federation of
Salvadorian Workers

FENASTRAS

10a avenida Norte, 120

Costado Oriente del Mercado ex-cuartel

San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: (503) 21 18 58

Federation of Independent Associations
of El Salvador

FEASIES

1a Avenida Norte, 811

San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: (503) 22 39 91

Newspaper

Diario Latino

6a avenida Norte, 325

San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: (503) 71 09 71

COPAZ

Asamblea Legislativa

6a planta

Edificio Centro de gobierno

San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: (503) 71 35 88

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 October 1992.