

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 377/93 Possible political killing / fear for safety 26 October 1993

El SALVADOR Francisco VELIS, opposition politician

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the killing of Francisco Velis.

At 7.40 am on 25 October, as he was taking his one-year-old daughter to a creche (*guardería*) in the capital, San Salvador, two unidentified men in civilian clothing approached and shot him in the head and neck at close range.

Passers-by claim that several vehicles were involved in the shooting, which appears to have been a carefully organized operation. The assailants were able to flee, despite the presence of a National Police patrol in the vicinity.

Francisco Velis was a member of the *Consejo Nacional* (National Council) of the **Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)**, (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front), the former armed opposition group which recently became a political party. He was standing as the FMLN's candidate for deputy to the National Assembly in the presidential and legislative elections to be held in March 1994.

This killing further increases Amnesty International's fear for the safety of members of opposition parties in the run-up to the March 1994 elections.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This killing is the latest in a series against members of the FMLN and of its electoral ally, the *Convergencia Democrática* (CD). In most cases the identity of the perpetrators is still unknown. In some, the authorities have suggested that the motive was probably not political, but the pattern of killings seems to implicate government forces or agents linked to them. The killing of Francisco Velis follows a recent publicity campaign by the ruling ARENA party which reportedly makes personal attacks on opposition political figures. As the electoral campaign intensifies, so too has the climate of threats and intimidations against opposition figures.

The FMLN became a political party earlier this year under the terms of the 1992 Peace Accords which ended the country's 12-year-old armed conflict. The Accords included commitments and reforms aimed at protecting human rights and putting an end to the massive violation of human rights which characterized the war period. However, many of these reforms have yet to be implemented. Meanwhile, an amnesty law passed earlier this year has meant that those who committed abuses in the past remain free.

Amnesty International believes that the recent killings and threats could be evidence of continued activity by the so-called "death squads". During the war, these clandestine groups or individuals, inextricably linked to state structures, systematically carried out killings and "disappearances" of

suspected FMLN members. The Truth Commission, appointed last year by the United Nations to investigate past human rights abuses in El Salvador, highlighted the urgent need for a special enquiry into the activities of the "death squads" because of the threat that these still posed to post-war society. Although there have been substantial reforms to the armed forces, no enquiry into "death squad" structures has been carried out and other recommendations made by the Truth Commission have so far been ignored.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the killing of Francisco Velis, an FMLN electoral candidate and member of the party's National Council, particularly in view of the series of killings and threats against members of the FMLN and Convergencia Democratica in recent months;
- requesting that an immediate investigation be carried out into his killing and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to do all that is in their power to guarantee the safety of members of opposition parties in the months leading to the March 1994 elections
- calling on the government to comply with the human rights commitments it made in the Peace Accords, by opening a thorough investigation into alleged "death squad" killings and bringing to justice those responsible, so as to send a clear message that human rights violations will no longer be tolerated.

APPEALS TO:

President

Lic. Alfredo Cristiani
 Presidente de la República de El Salvador
 San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: President Cristiani, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: + 503 81 0018

Telexes: 20245 RS SAL or 20522 PRES SAL

Salutation: Su Excelencia/Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr. José Manuel Pacas Castro
 Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
 Boulevard Manuel Enrique Araujo Km. 6
 San Salvador, El Salvador

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, San Salvador, El Salvador

Faxes: + 503 98 0334/98 0314

Telexes: 20179 RREE SAL

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights

Dr. Carlos Molina Fonseca
 Procurador para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
 Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos

9^a Avda. Norte y 5^a Calle Pte.
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Farabundo Martí Liberation Front
Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)
Secretaría de Derechos Humanos
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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 7 December 1993.