

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND JUSTICE FOR MASSACRE VICTIMS

International pressure is growing on the government of El Salvador to ensure justice for the victims of a series of massacres carried out by the armed forces in December 1981. The global attention on the case around the thirtieth anniversary of the killings gives an opportunity for El Salvador to take decisive action on the case.

On 11, 12 and 13 December 1981 **at least 767 men, women and children** were massacred in El Mozote and nearby villages, in northeastern El Salvador, during the armed conflict in the country, which lasted from 1980 to 1992. Women and girls were subjected to sexual violence before they were killed. Men were interrogated, tortured and executed. The villages were demolished. The survivors and relatives of those killed still do not know the truth about what happened to their loved ones or where they are buried.

The suffering this causes the survivors and relatives of those killed is so great that it has been called torture by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), an inter-governmental body, and the UN Committee Against Torture. Moreover, the report of the UN Truth Commission for El Salvador, released in 1993, two years after the end of the conflict, documented the massacre and named some of the perpetrators. However, the survivors and the relatives of those massacred have never received redress through access to truth, justice or reparations.

Impunity for these crimes against humanity persists in part due to El Salvador's General Amnesty Law, which came into force only one week after the UN report was released. The law denies access to justice to survivors and shields the perpetrators from being punished. It remains in place despite public commitments by the government to take steps towards its repeal. In December 2010 the IACHR made several recommendations to the State regarding the repealing of the Amnesty Law, ensuring reparations, identification of the victims, investigation and prosecution of those found to be responsible for the abuses and for those that have obstructed justice ever since. Amnesty International believes that following the recent reports on the massacre by the UN Committee Against Torture and the IACHR, international pressure on El Salvador on this anniversary could make a difference in the fight for justice on this case.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Demanding that the Salvadoran authorities guarantee redress to the survivors and the relatives of those massacred in El Mozote and nearby villages in December 1981 through access to justice, truth and reparations.
- Urging that the authorities repeal the Amnesty Law with immediate effect.
- Calling on the authorities to comply with all the recommendations made by the IACHR in December 2010.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JANUARY 2012 TO:

President

Presidente Mauricio Funes,
Casa Presidencial,
Alameda Dr. Manuel Enrique Araujo,
No. 5500
San Salvador
EL SALVADOR
Fax: +503 22 43 99 47
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/fmlnoficial>

Salutation: **Estimado**
Presidente/Dear President

President of the Legislative Assembly

Sigfrido Reyes,
Asamblea Legislativa
Edificio de la Asamblea Legislativa
Centro de Gobierno, San Salvador
El Salvador
Fax: +503 2281 9812
Email: sreyes@asamblea.gob.sv
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/sigfridoreyes>

Salutation: **Estimado Señor Reyes**

Attorney General

Romeo Benjamín Barahona Meléndez
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
Calle Cortez Blanco Poniente, #20,
Urbanización Madre Selva 3, Antiguo
Cuscatlán, La Libertad.
San Salvador,
El Salvador

Fax: +503 2246 4950
Salutation: **Estimado Sr. Fiscal/Dear**
Attorney General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 11, 12 and 13 December 1981, the Salvadoran armed forces carried out a series of mass extrajudicial executions in El Mozote, and in the La Joya and Cerro Pando cantons, and the villages of La Ranchería, Jocote Amarillo and Los Toriles.. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, (IACHR), the massacres were carried out indiscriminately and the victims included an alarming number of children, constituting one of the most abhorrent crimes against humanity committed by the Salvadoran military.

In December 2010, the IACHR concluded that the State was responsible for extrajudicial executions of men, women and children, rape of women, the destruction of people's property and their means of subsistence, forced displacement, and violating the personal integrity of the survivors and the family members of those executed and their right to access justice. The IACHR made several recommendations to the State regarding the repealing of the Amnesty Law, ensuring reparations, identification of the victims, investigation and prosecution of those found to be responsible for the abuses and for those that have obstructed justice ever since.

The Inter-American Court and Commission are just one amongst many international mechanisms for human rights protection that have called on El Salvador to abolish its amnesty law and establish the truth of the abuses that took place during the armed conflict of 1980 – 1991. Other expert bodies such as the UN Committee Against Torture, the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination have pronounced on El Salvador's amnesty law. A recommendation was also made as part of the Universal Periodic Review in February 2010 for the State to review the law. El Salvador should look to the example of other countries in the region which have repealed their amnesty laws, such as Argentina and most recently, Uruguay.

An estimated 75,000 people died in the armed conflict in El Salvador between 1980 and 1992. The conflict led to gross and extensive human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, other unlawful killings, "disappearances" and torture. Among the victims were human rights defenders, trade unionists, lawyers, journalists, opponents of the government (whether real or presumed) and, for the most part, innocent civilians who had no direct involvement in the conflict. As in the case of El Mozote and the surrounding areas, whole villages were targeted by the armed forces and their inhabitants massacred.

Name: At least 767 men, women and children
Gender m/f: both

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