

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**AI Index: AMR 29/03/94
Distr: UA/SC**

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per section.

EXTRA 13/94 Fear for safety

28 February 1994

**EL SALVADOR Nidia DÍAZ, (f), prominent FMLN member, election candidate
Elmer CRUZ ZEPEDA, her bodyguard**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Nidia Díaz and her bodyguard, Elmer Cruz Zepeda, following a violent attack on their vehicle on 24 February 1994. A group of heavily armed men opened fire on the vehicle as it was driven by Elmer Cruz Zepeda near the university residence *Los Lirios* in the north of the capital, San Salvador. Nidia Díaz had got out of the vehicle minutes before, although this may have been unknown to the attackers as the vehicle's windows were tinted. Elmer Cruz Zepeda was injured in the attack.

Nidia Díaz is a prominent member of the former armed opposition **Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional** (FMLN), Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, now a legal political party. She is standing as a candidate for the National Assembly for the department of San Vicente, in the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 20 March 1994.

While the identity of the attackers is not yet clear, Amnesty International fears that this attack may be part of an intimidation campaign by elements linked to the military and civilian authorities, aimed at activists and supporters of the FMLN in the run-up to the elections.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the last four months, since the electoral campaign began, many FMLN activists have been targets of apparently political killings and death threats. The vast majority of these killings and threats remain unclarified, with little or no investigation being carried out.

Amnesty International believes that the recent killings and threats are evidence of continued activity by the so-called "death squads". During the armed conflict, which ended in 1992, these clandestine groups or individuals, inextricably linked to state structures, systematically carried out killings and "disappearances" of suspected FMLN members. After much domestic and international pressure to put an end to the operations of "death squads", the government set up a commission in early December to investigate illegal armed groups; its findings are to be published in May 1994. However, Amnesty International is concerned that certain restrictions on the commission's mandate may prevent it from carrying out an exhaustive and impartial investigation into "death squad" abuses.

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

- expressing concern at the attack on the vehicle of FMLN leader Nidia Díaz, in which her bodyguard Elmer Cruz Zepeda was injured;
- pointing out that this attack has occurred in the context of a series of killings, threats and attacks against members and supporters of the FMLN;
- asking that immediate steps be taken to identify those responsible for the attack and bring them to justice;
- asking for measures to guarantee the safety of FMLN members and all those

participating in the March elections;

- stating that the eradication of "death squads" and the bringing to justice of their members is an essential guarantee for the forthcoming elections and for human rights in the future.

APPEALS TO:

Minister for Foreign Affairs

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Salutation: Señor Ministro

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Salutation: Señor Presidente

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Secretaría de Derechos Humanos
FMLN
Calle Gabriela Mistral N° 209
San Salvador, El Salvador

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 28 March 1994.