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El Salvador: Reports On Political Violence, January- november 1988

by Deborah Tyroler

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According to a report released Dec. 7 by the independent Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES), political violence claimed the lives of 1,747 civilians and resulted in the disappearance of an addition 231 persons between January and November this year. According to the CDHES, the vast majority of deaths and disappearances occurred after the victims were captured by the armed forces. The report did not include casualties sustained by government troops and rebel forces. The CDHES counted 178 civilian deaths during the month of November. Death squad activities, asserted the report, have significantly increased in recent weeks. A spokesperson for CDHES said that the rising number of corpses discovered bearing signs of torture, combined with the escalating numbers of assassinations, disappearances and death threats indicate that the armed forces and the government are interested in returning to a "state of terror and the peace of the graveyard." Based on weekly reports distributed by the Salvadoran armed forces press office, AP calculated that during the first 11 months of the year the military lost approximately 350 soldiers, and the rebels, 700 combatants. According to the armed forces, the guerrillas were responsible for 300 civilian deaths in direct attacks and mine explosions. For the same period, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) reported more than 5,000 casualties suffered by the military, including dead and wounded. The FMLN rarely supplies information on rebel casualties. On Dec. 7, the FMLN announced a new political-military campaign which began Dec. 5 with attacks on military installations in San Miguel and Morazan departments. The stated objective of the new campaign is to prepare Salvadorans for insurrection. In a broadcast by rebel station Radio Venceremos, the FMLN General Command reported that the military sustained 52 casualties during rebel attacks in the two departments on Dec. 5. (Basic data from AP, 12/07/88)

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