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El Salvador: Notes On Recent Human Rights Abuses

by Deborah Tyroler

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This week the body of Maria Cristina Gomez, a union organizer and Sunday school teacher, was found in San Salvador. She was abducted two weeks ago. After being shot four times and killed, acid was poured over her face and back. According to the New York Times (04/20/89), Gomez's death was "one of a growing number of recent killings attributed by monitors to paramilitary death squads." On April 13, Francisco Ramirez, a repatriate from the Mesa Grande (Honduras) refugee camp last November, was abducted by soldiers from the Second Military Detachment in Sensuntepeque, capital of Cabanas department. On April 14, Leonardo Munoz Pacheco, a 35-year-old day laborer and member of the El Soto agricultural cooperative, Santa Ana department, was arrested by soldiers. When the soldiers attempted to forcibly take Munoz and his daughter during a trip to fetch water, they tried to scream in an effort to alert community members. The two were gagged. When a neighbor attempted to learn what was happening, the soldiers fired into the air, and shouted that if anyone chose to approach them, "a massacre" would ensue. The soldiers released the daughter before leaving the locale. Residents believe the troops pertain to the artillery brigade based in Jan Juan Opico, La Libertad department. The El Soto cooperative receives some support and technical training from FEDECOOPADES, a member institution of Diaconia. Cooperative members are part of a community pertaining to a pastoral project of the Jesuit Refugee Service. On the afternoon of April 16, Antonio Cornejo, member of the Lutheran Church and former political prisoner released in 1987, was abducted by armed men in civilian dress during a walk with his wife and children on the outskirts of Apopa. Apopa is located some 13 km. from San Salvador. As of April 17, Cornejo was being detained at Treasury Police headquarters in the capital. (Basic data from 04/14/89, 04/18/89 reports by CUANES, Chicago IL; New York Times, 04/20/89)

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