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On the evening of June 15, Salvadoran union leader Jose Tomas Mazariego was released by the Treasury Police following an international outcry over his abduction. Mazariego, a member of the executive committee of the Salvadoran Association of Telecommunications Workers (ASTTEL) and of the international relations committee of the National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS), was captured June 12 after picking up his visa at the US Embassy in San Salvador. He was scheduled to arrive in the US June 13 for a speaking tour sponsored by several unions. (See CAU 06/14/89.)

On June 16, Mazariego told reporters that after he left the embassy accompanied by a friend "I noticed they (police) followed me in two cars. Armed men with rifles and dressed in civilian clothing detained me violently and fired at my companion, who tried to impede the capture...They did not identify themselves and hit me when I protested." Mazariego said that during his captivity he was held naked, blindfolded and bound at the wrists, and was given no food or water. He said he was nearly suffocated three times when police agents placed a hood filled with lime over his head (known as the "capucha"). Next, Mazariego said he was severely beaten, and hydrochloric acid was poured on his legs. The union leader said Treasury Police officials tried to force him to sign a declaration stating that he was a member of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). Police agents, he added, also tried to force him to say that the UNTS was linked to the FMLN, and to provide information on union leaders Humberto Centeno, Marco Tulio Lima and Julio Cesar Portillo. Mazariego said that while he was being interrogated and beaten, the police agents told him "the former government was too slow and with the arrival of (President Alfredo) Cristiani, they now have complete license to finish with all the unions, which they called facades for the FMLN."

Rep. Thomas M. Foglietta (D-PA) and 16 other members of the US Congress sent a protest letter to US Ambassador William Walker, demanding an investigation into the case. The letter said, "If these reports are verified, then the government was torturing Mr. Mazariego at the same time that Vice President [Dan] Quayle was talking to President Alfredo Cristiani about human rights." Thirty union organizations with international affiliations also sent telegrams to the Salvadoran government demanding Mazariego's release. These unions included the ACTWU, ILGWU, CWA, AFSCME, NEA, IUE, UE, UAW, and UFCW. Mazariego was scheduled to arrive in the US June 20 to meet with members of Congress and union leaders. A communiqué issued by the Treasury Police confirmed Mazariego had been detained and that he suffered slight injuries while resisting police who took him into custody. The communiqué said Mazariego was questioned about belonging to the Armed Forces of Liberation, one of the guerrilla organizations in the FMLN. The communiqué said Mazariego has been under investigation since 1987. In a statement, Treasury Police chief Col. Heriberto Hernandez denied Mazariego had been tortured, and implied this was evidenced by his agents' failure to obtain a confession. In April this year, Mazariego was captured by armed men in civilian clothes, who tortured him and threatened to kill him. He was also detained by security forces in 1988, and received at least five death threats from September through October last year. (Basic data from AP, 06/16/89; Salpress-Notisal, 06/19/89; Philadelphia Inquirer, 06/14/89, 06/17/89; El Sol, 04/10/89, 04/17/89)