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El Salvador: Note On Prospective Penal Code Reforms

by Deborah Tyroler
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The Salvadoran government has introduced a legislative package that would crack down on dissent and peaceful means of protest. (See CAU 06/28/89.) If approved by the National Assembly, the penal code reforms would make persons who lobby international organizations to denounce human rights violations, or who possess or distribute information that "subverts the public order" subject to long jail terms. Critics denounced the legislation as repression that would prevent any anti-government organizing and all criticism of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), including from some of El Salvador's most extreme rightists. Dr. Segundo Montes, director of the Institute of Human Rights and the Political Science Department of the University of Central America in San Salvador, was cited by the New York Times as follows: "I think ARENA has a project of repression. They know they can't apply the rampant repression of the 1980's. Since they can't do it in a bestial way, they do it in a legal way. and to do it in a legal way, they need a new instrument." (Basic data from New York Times, 07/04/89)

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