El Salvador: Reports On Human Rights Abuses

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According to a recent report by the independent Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES), arbitrary abductions by the military of civilian grassroots organization leaders last month totaled 128, compared to 50 in June 1988. The number of assassinations in June this year, said CDHES, was slightly higher than the 1988 figure. Disappearances in June 1989 totaled 131, compared to 137 last year. CDHES official Celia Medrano said, "They don't disappear them any more, they just kill them openly." June 8, June 10: The Armed Forces Press Committee (COPREFA) ran ads in daily newspaper El Mundo accusing the National Union of Displaced and Earthquake Victims (UNADES) of having links with the insurgency. UNADES has repeatedly denied any connection to the rebels. The October 1986 earthquake killed 1,500, injured 10,000, and left an estimated 300,000 homeless. At UNADES' request, US humanitarian aid groups sent a convoy from the US to El Salvador in March with $2.5 million in material aid for earthquake victims. June 19: The National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS) denounced what it called the "Armed Forces terror campaign unleashed against UNADES." June 30: Martha Chavez, member UNADES, her husband and two young children were captured by the National Police. Chavez was the sixth UNADES member captured by security forces during the month of June. July 2: Boris Canjura, coordinator of the Salvadoran Refugee Committee "Oscar Arnulfo Romero," located in Washington DC, was released by Treasury Police, along with two US religious worker. The three were captured July 1 by Atonal battalion troops as they attempted to deliver packages of medicines and household items at a camp of displaced persons near the town of Santa Cruz, Usulutan department. Three Usulutan residents captured with the delegation were released on July 6. Members of the delegation reported having been blindfolded overnight at Sixth Infantry Brigade headquarters in Usulutan and stripped of their clothing by Treasury Police the next day after being transferred to San Salvador. They were interrogated for hours at both garrisons. A spokesperson for Canjura's committee attributed their release to international and domestic pressure. July 3: The Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners and the Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador (COMADRES) occupied the Calvary Catholic church in downtown San Salvador to demand the release of three of their members detained July 2. July 4: Salvadoran refugees at the Mesa Grande camp in Honduras issued a statement denouncing the June 26 capture and subsequent disappearance by Honduran troops of camp resident Sinforoso Lainez Rodriguez. July 5: Rebel Radio Farabundo Marti reported that during the month of June, the armed forces killed 67 civilians, detained 80 and disappeared 10. Workers at the National Institute of Public Employees' Retirement Fund (INPEP) launched an indefinite strike to protest the capture of co-worker and union official, Rigoberto Sanchez de Leon on the same day. Sanchez de Leon was seized by armed men in civilian dress, and was believed to be in National Police custody. July 6: Residents of resettled villages in Chalatenango department denounced the bombing and shelling of their communities by the military. In a public statement, the Inter-American Regional Labor Organization (ORIT), a US-affiliated international trade union federation, condemned the Salvadoran government for a "wave of repression against the popular sectors" in El Salvador. ORIT denounced "arbitrary detentions, tortures, assassinations, searches, violent military occupations of trade union locals and humanitarian aid offices, as well as the unjust capture of trade union members and leaders for making demands for socio-economic benefits.
so as to better their living and work conditions." July 7: The National Association of Agricultural Workers (ANTA) denounced the abductions of at least 17 farmworkers in Usulutan and San Miguel departments, and three others in La Paz department. July 9: Salvadoran Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas described as a "sign of trouble" the increase in captures and assassinations of civilians committed by military personnel. "Tutela Legal [legal aid office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador]," he said, "verified that members of the armed forces committed a number of murders. Of these, some were verified by judicial authorities." He stressed the need for dialogue so as to achieve peace. July 10: Six members of the El Soto agricultural cooperative in Santa Ana department were captured by soldiers. They were accused of links with the guerrillas. University sources reported the capture of two students at the University of El Salvador campus in San Salvador, and one student at the Santa Ana campus, as well as the abduction of a sociology professor by heavily armed men in civilian dress. The Nationalist Democratic Union (UDN) party denounced ARENA for preparing a "witch hunt" targeting the political opposition. The main tool in the hunt, said UDN, was the ultraright Pro Peace and Work Crusade. July 11: The National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS) denounced the ARENA government's "strategy of generalized repression against the people and their grassroots and political organizations." According to the UNTS, the ARENA strategy includes the removal of peasants from their land, massive layoffs in the public sector, and legal measures to silence popular protest. July 13: Rebel sources reported that the armed forces had violated international law on the treatment of political prisoners in the case of rebel commander Pedro Antonio Andrade Martinez. According to the rebels, Andrade Martinez was captured and subjected to several days of torture prior to being turned over to the court system. In addition to contravention of international law, the military had ignored Salvadoran law which stipulates a maximum of 72 hours for investigation and interrogation. The rebel sources said US citizens N.A. Richard and J. Chivilficier, members of US embassy staffs in El Salvador and Mexico, respectively, participated with the National Police in the torture sessions. Rebel Radio Farabundo Marti reported 2,058 civilian victims of repression. Of the total, 1,294 were assassinated, 647 abducted, and 117 disappeared. Soldiers pertaining to the Arce Battalion, the 1st Infantry Brigade and the National Guard detained 11 peasants in San Miguel, hours after a bomb exploded in a private home close to the local office of the National Agricultural Workers Association (ANTA). Among the captured was ANTA leader Luis Alonso Aleman. Official sources accused the detained of possessing "subversive" material. Army soldiers detained Melvin Conrado Elias, member of the Bread, Land, Work and Liberty Movement (MPTL), in San Salvador. Charges against him were unknown. July 14: Over 1,000 secondary students, enrolled at the Alberto Masferrer Institute in San Salvador, launched an indefinite strike to demand the release of two recently detained high school students. Members of the Christian Pro-Displaced Committee (CRIPDES) marched in San Salvador, demanding the release from custody of eight of the their members, and in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the organization. CRIPDES was established on July 14, 1984, by 50 Salvadorans displaced by the war. Founding members decided to organize themselves with the objective of returning to their places of origin, and to support refugees outside of El Salvador. [Basic data El Mundo, 06/07-10/89, 06/19/89, 06/23/89; Salpress-Notisal, 07/10/89; Radio Farabundo Marti, 07/05/89; Toronto Globe and Mail, 07/07/89 (summarized by El Salvador On Line, 07/10/89); Salpress-Notisal weekly report, 07/16/89]