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# Notes On Americas Watch Letter Addressed To Central American Presidents

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## **Notes On Americas Watch Letter Addressed To Central American Presidents**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

*Category/Department: General*

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On Aug. 7, the second anniversary of the Aug. 1987 Central American peace accord, Americas Watch released a letter condemning continued human rights abuses in four of the Central American countries. The letter, addressed to the presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, said the "solemn commitments" on respect for human rights endorsed in the 1987 accord "remain largely unrealized." In El Salvador, said the letter, government troops, right-wing death squads and leftist guerrillas continue to kill civilians. Citing figures from Tutela Legal, the human rights office of El Salvador's Roman Catholic Church, Americas Watch said government forces had killed 39 civilians between January and July 13, death squads 17 and guerrilla forces 56. It charged military and security forces with "torture of detainees." In Guatemala, political killings and disappearances appear to have increased following a failed May 9 coup attempt, Americas Watch said, citing two massacres in which nine persons were reported killed. Torture, killings and disappearances also were reported in Honduras, the letter said, pointing out that seven persons had disappeared in the last two years after being captured by the military, and that two union presidents and two student leaders had been killed during the first week of July. In Nicaragua, Americas Watch said the government was responsible for "violent abuses" by soldiers or security police in the past two years, mainly in remote areas of the north-central part of the country. These abuses, primarily directed against suspected contra collaborators, include 89 killings or disappearances since 1987. Americas Watch said it had received responses to its complaints from the government in a fourth of the cases, and that some persons held responsible for such abuses in 1988 have been punished. (Basic data from Washington Post, 08/07/89)

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