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Nicaragua: Americas Watch Delegation Begins Tour Of Prisons

by Deborah Tyroler
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On Sept. 12 in Managua, Juan Mendez of Americas Watch told Barricada that the human rights organization had initiated a tour of Nicaragua's state security prisons, also known as federal penitentiaries. The tour marks the first time, according to Notimex, that Americas Watch has had access to the six institutions. Opposition groups have claimed the prisons harbor clandestine torture chambers, and that 6,000 persons have been incarcerated for political crimes and collaborating with the contras. In August, an International Red Cross inspection team counted 1,306 persons detained for alleged counter-revolutionary activities. Mendez said he and two other Americas Watch representatives will spend two weeks interviewing prison inmates, and conducting other types of investigations of the prisons. Next, Mendez told Barricada that Americas Watch negotiations with the contra commanders in Honduras to obtain authorization to visit their camps have met with little success. The purpose of such visits, he said, would be to determine the number of kidnapping victims held by the contras. Mendez said, "We have met with little cooperation on the part of the counterrevolution and less from the Honduran government." The Nicaraguan government claims the contras in Honduras are holding at least 1,800 kidnapping victims. The contras deny the existence of such victims. (Basic data from Notimex, 09/12/89)

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