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According to Honduran human rights monitoring groups, political murders, bombings, and death threats issued by rightist paramilitary groups are increasing. The monitors say that government security forces kill suspected common criminals after their arrest on an almost daily basis. The principal monitoring organization is the Honduran Committee to Defend Human Rights (CDDHH). The Committee reports at least six political and 78 killings by police and security forces from January through July, compared to two political murders and 47 killings last year. Torture, beatings and other abuses have tripled compared to 1988. During an interview with the New York Times, Oscar Anibal Puerto, an attorney and vice president of the Committee, said: "The situation is getting more and more alarming...Poor people only have two options to die from hunger or a bullet from the law...Death is part of the landscape. Seeing a body will soon be like seeing a river, a cactus quite normal." Puerto's office is located on the Plaza of Our Sorrows in Tegucigalpa. On a wall outside, a rightist paramilitary group, the Anti-Communist Action Alliance, had painted a slogan asserting that Committee activists are Nicaraguan puppets. Mutilated corpses are now being found on city streets in Honduras for the first time. According to Jorge Sierra, a social science professor at the San Pedro Sula Teachers' College who works with local CDDHH chapter, "They used to hide the bodies in the sugar cane fields on the outskirts of town. But now there's no fear that anything will happen. So they kill people in front of their friends and leave the bodies in the street. That way they create much more terror." Human rights monitors and labor leaders say they are no longer permitted to talk on most radio shows and that their comments are often censored. Some claim they are being followed. The violence appears to be concentrated in San Pedro Sula, also the focus of union organizing, leftist activism, and anti-Americanism. Elections are scheduled in three months. Critics argue that President Jose Azcona Hoyo's government is little more than a civilian facade for de facto military rule. In the words of Francisco Meraz, a Tegucigalpa teacher and director of Caritas, a Catholic relief organization, "It is a democracy. But the people can only demonstrate on one day election day." Ruben Dario Zepeda, Attorney General and chief of the government Human Rights Commission, complained that critics and monitoring groups have unfairly focused on Honduras whose record is better than that of its neighbors. Zepeda acknowledged abuses by the police. He pointed out the government is attempting to halt the violence, and has dismissed more than 100 police officers. The government is limited, he said, because it lacks forensic resources to prosecute many common crimes and most human rights cases. Meanwhile, Zepeda also acknowledged that he is frightened, and looks forward to the end of his term. He has received several recent death threats, and told the Times that his wife is close to a nervous breakdown. In concluding the interview with the Times, he said, "I have six more months of this torture to go." Armed forces chief Gen. Humberto Regaldo says leftist extremists and drug traffickers are responsible for the violence. Human rights monitors say the vast majority of victims are left of center. (Basic data from New York Times, 08/27/89)