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El Salvador: Hunger Strikers Protest Public Employee Dismissals

by Deborah Tyroler

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On March 21, representatives of over 4,000 public employees dismissed thus far in 1990 commenced a hunger strike at El Rosario Catholic church in San Salvador. The strikers are demanding that the workers be returned to their jobs. The strikers are members of the National Association of Agriculture and Livestock Ministry Employees (ANTMAG), the Committee of Unemployed Municipal Workers and of the Finance Ministry employees' group. ANTMAG secretary general Hugo Antonio Martinez told Notimex that 4,578 employees of national and municipal governments had been dismissed and replaced with persons from the National Republican Alliance (ARENA) "power base." Martinez said complaints against the dismissals have been filed at all possible levels, from the civil service tribunal to the Supreme Court, national legislature and President Alfredo Cristiani. Since the response to their complaints has been negative or non-existent, he said, "we are obliged to make our grievances known in the strongest possible ways. Finally, Martinez said that despite the state of siege, "the workers' struggle will continue." In a statement, the National Salvadoran Workers Union (UNTS) has demanded termination of unjustified dismissals, and an end to the state of siege imposed during the guerrilla offensive in November. The UNTS is El Salvador's largest labor group. The UNTS also announced that it had forwarded to the US Congress a report on the increasing number of human rights violations committed by state security forces in recent months. (Basic data from Notimex, 03/21/90)

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