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## Honduras: Report On Human Rights Violations

by Deborah Tyroler

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May 27: Liduvina Hernandez, president of the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared (COFADEH), told reporters that "impunity continues to characterize political crimes and human rights violations. Not a single soldier or civilian has been punished for these abuses." She said that COFADEH is demanding investigation into the disappearance of 143 persons during the "dirty war" of the early 1980s and prosecution of perpetrators. June 5: According to a government communique, a recent report by the US-based human rights monitor, Americas Watch, was "unfounded." The Americas Watch report stated that President Rafael Callejas' government had made "no serious effort" to prosecute persons accused of political assassinations. The killings, said the report, may have been carried out by government-backed death squads, police forces, or members of the military. According to Americas Watch, human rights violations are attributable to the "tremendous power" of the armed forces. Political prisoners, said the report, are routinely subjected to torture. Finally, Americas Watch asserted that the US government should apply more pressure on the Callejas administration to terminate human rights abuses. Ramon Custodio, president of Honduran Human Rights Defense Committee (CODEH), told ACAN-EFE that human rights violations continue, despite the government's "moderate attempts" to improve police conduct and the administration of justice. June 10: At a press conference, Ramon Custodio summarized findings from a CODEH report on human rights abuses which support claims made by Americas Watch. The report said that in the first four months of the year, three political assassinations were recorded, and 20 killings caused by abuse of authority. Custodio said most of the abuses were committed by members of the armed forces. According to Custodio, the Callejas government has failed to demonstrate interest in correcting its "erratic human rights conduct." The government's action, he said, has been limited to "conciliatory gestures that leave the real problems unanswered." June 12: The governmental human rights commission released a report stating that 261 persons were accused of human rights violations in 1990 and the first five months of 1991. Twenty-seven of the accused are presently free on bail, and the rest are either in prison or under judicial investigation. The report notes that most of the 261 are members of the public security forces. The government commission admitted certain "weaknesses" in "our system," but that such shortcomings are "not the product of a policy predetermined or designed by the government or the armed forces." Attorney General and president of the commission Leonardo Matute asserted that the report "refutes the Americas Watch report accusing our government of failing to respect fundamental human rights." June 18: The government released a communique rejecting an Amnesty International report which asserted that "torture and other human rights abuses continue" in Honduras. The statement said the report contained "subjective evaluations of the government's conduct with respect to human rights." June 27: At a press conference, COFADEH members denounced the torture of 16-year-old Rony Molina by public security force agents. According to Molina, he was arrested June 13 in Marcala, La Paz department, for walking alone at 9 p.m. During six days in detention, Molina suffered torture at the hands of a lieutenant, sergeant and a police investigator. The victim was beaten, burned with battery acid, and forced to wear a hood filled with lime and chile peppers. Upon release, Molina was sent before the Marcala town judge who refused to see him on grounds that he was a minor. Molina said a court secretary ordered him returned to jail without questioning him. Molina's father secured

his release. His father said that police in Marcala had been harassing the boy since he was 12 and accusing him of thefts he had not committed, apparently for failing to pay bribes and protection money. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 06/05/91, 06/10/91, 06/12/91, 06/18/91; AFP, 05/27/91, 06/27/91)

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