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El Salvador: Summary Of Human Rights Developments
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In a communique published Nov. 8 in local newspapers, the UN observer mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) emphasized that its mandate does not include monitoring the civil war or common criminal activity. The ONUSAL mission is limited to monitoring compliance with accords between government and rebel negotiators in July 1990, particularly in the area of human rights. Government officials, businesspersons and rightist politicians have criticized ONUSAL for failing to denounce rebel military and sabotage activities. On Nov. 9, Maria Julia Hernandez, director of the archdiocesan human rights office Tutela Legal, told reporters that to date the presence of ONUSAL has not resulted in an improvement in the human rights situation. ONUSAL is preparing to submit its second report on human rights in El Salvador to UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Hernandez said, "Torture is still a widespread practice and the judicial system does not function as it should." Joaquin Caceres, spokesperson for the independent Salvadoran Human Rights Commission (CDHES), said that while serious violations continue, ONUSAL's presence is necessary and has inspired hope throughout the nation. According to a Defense Ministry report covering the Oct. 29-Nov. 4 period, the rebels committed 149 rights violations against civilians. Economic sabotage included 63 attacks on the nation's electricity grid. Lorena Martinez, vice president of the Christian Committee for the Displaced (CRIPDES), denounced the army's practice of planting land mines near resettlement communities in Chalatenango department. She said there is no possible justification for mines in these areas, pointing out that the large majority of residents consists of women and children. On Nov. 13 at United Nations headquarters in New York, special representative to the UN Human Rights Commission Jose Antonio Pastor Ridruejo released a report on the human rights situation in El Salvador. According to the report, human rights abuses committed by government security forces and the rebels continue, although frequency has declined compared to 1990. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 11/08/91, 11/09/91; Agence France-Presse, Spanish news service EFE, 11/13/91)

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