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PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

RELEASED
El Salvador: Human Rights
Special Project (1993)

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 1988

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The Honorable Edwin Corr
Ambassador
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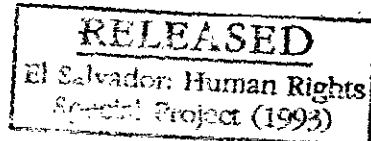
Dear Ambassador Corr:

I appreciate your recent visit to discuss labor rights in El Salvador and your willingness to investigate certain violations against organized workers which appear to have involved government forces. Discussing these cases with the Salvadoran authorities may help protect other members of labor unions and associations in the future. Never having seen a point-by-point factual rebuttal by the Reagan Administration yet of the evidence presented in support of the Americas Watch petition, I am hopeful that you will now proceed to find the facts as best you can.

The following cases were submitted to me by the Americas Watch. Some have been described in that organization's March 1988 report on labor rights; others are abuses which the organization has learned of since the report was published.

April 8, 1987: Daniel Ortiz, treasurer of the San Carlos Cooperative, was killed along with three others in a grenade attack. The Army arrested two people identified by residents as a former member of the Army and a former member of the National Guard. It is our understanding that both suspects have been released, though we would appreciate the Embassy's confirmation. The Army press office has since claimed that the victims were killed by guerrilla land mines.

April 16, 1987: Antonio de Jesus Hernandez Martinez, the Secretary General of ANTA for the Departmental Council of San Miguel, was abducted and murdered by soldiers of the Cuscatlan Battalion. Witnesses identified the body, which had bullet holes, by the clothes and a briefcase, and a May 18 petition by a government prosecutor noted that Hernandez had been arrested before his death. A witness to the arrest and peasants who found the body have been harassed and threatened by soldiers from the Cuscatlan Battalion. Though positive identification of the remains was not possible following an exhumation on May 25 (the remains appeared to have been disturbed, and included bones from another corpse), it is clear that Hernandez was either killed or disappeared following his capture by the Cuscatlan Battalion. If the Embassy determines that the exhumed remains are not those of Hernandez Martinez, I would appreciate your investigation of his disappearance, and strongly press the Salvadoran military for an accounting of his whereabouts.



May 1, 1987: Luis Armando Lemus Urrutia and Edwin Ernesto Vargas Aguilar, members of SICAFE, and Julio Ernest Garcia Lucero, member of the bakers union and brother of a SICAFE official were abducted at a bus station in Menendez Park, Santa Ana. Witnesses at the bus station identified their captors as soldiers from the Second Brigade, and the men's mothers have said that they saw the vehicle which took the men at the Second Brigade. In another case which may be related, Jose Efrain Hernandez, another SICAFE member, was captured by Treasury Police one day before the disappearances and freed on the condition that he report regularly to the authorities on the union's membership, leaders, and activities.

June 29, 1987: Jose Raul Henriquez, a promoter for ANTA and former Secretary for Agrarian Matters for the Avicola poultry workers union, was abducted from his home by two members of the civil defense of Las Delicias and a National Guardsman stationed in San Martin. His widow, who witnessed the abduction and recognized his captors, was later threatened herself by one of the civil defense members for having denounced the murder.

July 8, 1987: Rene Andrade Ponce, a leader of a pre-cooperative peasant group affiliated with the ANC, was killed in Montepeque, Cuscatlan. Witnesses to his abduction and beating identified his captors as members of the National Guard.

August 16, 1987: Eulalio Antonio Martinez Vasquez, a member of ANIS, the indigenous peasants association, was killed by three civil defense members in Canton La Nueva, Acajutla, according to ANIS.

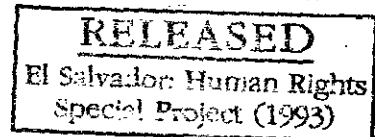
January 1, 1988: Carlos Guardado Lopez was strangled to death by a soldier named Lorenzo Morales, a soldier with the Bracamonte Battalion, and a member of the civil defense, Jorge Escobar. The assassination took place at Canton El Golfo, in Zacatecoluca, La Paz. There were witnesses. The victim was robbed of 300 colones which belonged to his cooperative of San Jose Las Flores. He was a member of a CCS (Salvadoran Peasants Central) association affiliated with the CGT. According to the president of the cooperative, Alfredo Guardado Menjivar, there have been no legal proceedings taken up in this case.

February 26, 1988: Mario Cruz Rivera and Feliz Antonio Rivera, members of ASID, an association of indigenous peasants, were abducted from their homes by soldiers from the Third Brigade in El Tablon, Sociedad, Morazan, according to witnesses and family members. Their bodies were found with signs of torture the next day. A third ASID member, Sebastien Gutierrez, was captured by soldiers the same day and remains disappeared.

March 10, 1988: Humberto Centeno, Secretary General of ASTTEL, the telecommunications workers association, was forcibly abducted from a peaceful gathering of unionists by members of the Air Force. He was detained for two days during which time he was brutally beaten, kicked and jabbed with rifle butts, and subjected to death threats at gunpoint. He was hospitalized for three days as a result of his injuries, which were confirmed by a government Human Rights Commission doctor.

In addition to these examples of actual killings, torture, and disappearances, I would appreciate your investigating several examples cited

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by the Americas Watch of military suppression of legitimate trade union activities, including the following:

May 1987: Ten members of a local civil defense force occupied a farm where a CGT-affiliated farmworker association had conducted a strike and successfully petitioned the courts to reinstate its fired members. The workers have been repeatedly warned against continuing to press their economic demands.

August 25, 1987: According to officials from a CGT-affiliated union of dock workers, 100 navy soldiers militarized the port of El Triunfo during a legal strike and beat up the striking workers. Twenty-five workers were injured.

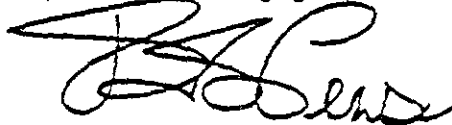
October 30, 1987: A legally recognized local of SICAFE, the coffee processors union, was threatened and intimidated when it attempted to organize at a plant in Santiago de Maria in Usulután when Col. Inocente Montano, of the Sixth Brigade, arrived by helicopter along with 200 soldiers in trucks. He called the unionists together and warned them that if they engaged in strikes, work stoppages, or protests he would cut off their heads. He then called together all the workers at the plant and warned them against strikes. He has revisited the plant since, and, according to the union, its leaders at the plant are under continual military surveillance.

December 7, 1987: Seventy-five soldiers occupied a farm in Usulután just hours after a successful strike and attempted to abduct several of the workers. Only when the farm owner told them the strike was over did they release the workers and leave.

Our discussion a few weeks ago was useful, but it did not satisfy the need to bring cold, hard facts to light about what happened in each of the worker rights violations that have been extensively described in three separate submissions to the U.S. Government by Americas Watch. The violations described in this letter alone suggest a disturbing pattern of violence and repression directed at the Salvadoran workers. At a minimum, your embassy personnel should vigorously pursue a full factual accounting of these violations.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response and also to your opinion of other worker rights abuses which will be described in the forthcoming Americas Watch petition.

Sincerely yours,



DON J. PEASE
Member of Congress

DJP/gnb