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| via fax: (503) 2243-7857<br><b>Sr. Elias Antonio Saca</b><br>President of El Salvador                           | via fax: (503) 2528-6096<br><b>Lic. Felix Garrid Safie</b><br>Attorney General of El Salvador       |
| via fax: (503) 2243-9930<br><b>Dr. Agustín García Calderón</b><br>President of the Supreme Court of El Salvador | Via fax: + 503 2222 0655<br><b>Oscar Humberto Luna</b><br>Ombudsman for the Defense of Human Rights |

July 15, 2007

We are extremely concerned for the safety of the 14 peaceful protesters who were violently arrested in Suchitoto, Cuscatlán Department, on July 2.

President Saca was scheduled to arrive in Suchitoto on July 2 to announce the new "National Policy for Water Decentralization," the first step in water privatization. CRIPDES, SETA (water workers union) and other groups organized a protest, which included street blockades that prevented the president from arriving. He was forced to return to San Salvador and announce the decentralization plan via press conference.

A National Civilian Police (PCN) vehicle stopped a CRIPDES (Association for Development of Rural Communities) truck before it reached the protest, handcuffed four passengers (CRIPDES leaders **Marta Lorena Araujo, Rosa Valle Centeno, María Haydee Chicas, and Manuel Antonio Rodriguez**) and took them to a local police station. Protesters then moved from the central park protest site to the police station to demand the release of those arrested. The police called in the "UMO" Riot Police, who forcefully dispersed the crowds with tear gas, rubber bullets and wooden batons. Police also attacked protestors on the roads, chased people for four hours into rural communities, and entered homes without warrants. In total, 25 people were injured with rubber bullets, 18 suffered serious effects of tear gas, 2 were hospitalized, and an undetermined number were beaten by police officers.

In addition to the four CRIPDES leaders, also arrested were leaders from the communities of Guillermo Ungo (**Sandra Guatemala, Santos Mancía**), Oratorio (**José Ever Fuentes, Facundo García**), San Antonio (**Héctor Ventura**), and Soyapango (**Patricio Valladares, Clemente Guevara, Yanira Méndez, Vicente Vásquez, Beatriz Nuila**). Thirteen of the fourteen arrested were sentenced on July 7 to three months of provisional detention; they could receive up to 60 year sentences under new "anti-terrorism" legislation.

Together with over 60 Salvadoran social movement organizations who have signed onto a powerful joint statement, we strongly urge you to

- release, without charges, those who are detained;
- denounce the increasing repression against the social movement;
- respect the human rights of the people to nonviolent freedom of expression and freedom of association.

These repressive events and the formation of "Special Tribunals" are a violation of the Constitution and the 1992 Peace Accords.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

CC: Ambassador Charles L. Glazer, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via fax: (503) 2278-6011  
 Ambassador René Antonio Leon Rodríguez, Embassy of El Salvador in the US ~ via fax: (202) 232-3763  
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States ~ via fax: (202)458-3992  
 Florentín Meléndez, El Salvador member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States ~ via fax: (202)458-3992  
 Paul Degler, El Salvador Desk, US State Department ~ via fax 202.647.2597  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email  
 CRISPAZ/CIS/CISPES/El Salvador

**The following people hereby urge that you take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**