

via fax: 011 503 2243 7857/9930
Elías Antonio Saca, President of El Salvador

via fax: 011-503-2281 5959
Rene Figueroa, Minister of the Interior

August 1, 2006

We are extremely concerned about the ramifications of the National Civilian Police (PNC) repression against a small student protest on July 5. The Salvadoran Ombudswoman for Human Rights Office has this the "worst violation of human rights since the Peace Accords."

About 200 police officers, including a riot squad, surrounded the 50 students who were demonstrating outside the gates of the National University against recent bus fare increases. After police violently grabbed and tried to arrest two 15-year olds, protesters threw rocks at them. Police responded with tear gas, rubber bullets, and some live ammunition, according to the director of the National Civilian Police (PNC). Two officers were killed and seven wounded by a high caliber weapon (the origin of the shots is still unknown). An undetermined number of students was also wounded. The incident occurred one day before an anti-terrorist bill was to be introduced into the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly. (The government commonly refers to demonstrators as "terrorists.")

One week earlier, some of the officers finished their first basic course at the US-staffed and funded International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), which is opposed by human rights organizations in both the US & El Salvador.

On July 31, two of our local congresspersons (Sherrod Brown and Dennis Kucinich) joined 44 other members of the US House of Representatives in sending a letter to US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, calling on the State Department to condemn the police attacks and conduct a review of the National Civilian Police, which was to be demilitarized as part of the 1992 Peace Accords.

We are concerned about a pattern of resurgent political violence in El Salvador:

June 2: after weeks of death threats, **Francisco Antonio Manzanares** and **Juana Monjaras de Manzanares**, parents of FMLN activist and Radio Venceremos co-founder Marina Manzanares, were brutally tortured and murdered in death squad fashion

June 30: PNC agents arrested (without due cause) student **Ricardo Gonzales Hernandez**, nephew of Frankie Flores, a representative of the FMLN in California and activist with SOA Watch and Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC).

July 6, 3am: police raided the office of CSTS (Coordinating Committee of Salvadoran Workers) without warrant and tortured **Daniel Ernesto Morales** for three hours before arresting him on trumped up charges. Just 12 hours earlier, CSTS had held a press conference to link the July 5 police violence to broader repression against workers and grassroots movements.

We strongly urge that you

- Call for a thorough and independent investigation into the July 5 shootings, as called for by Auxiliary Archbishop Gregoria Rosa Chávez and many other Salvadorans;
- Refrain from re-introducing the anti-terrorist law in the Salvadoran Assembly, a law that would only further the capacity of the police to repress the population;
- Stop sending Salvadoran police to the U.S. ILEA.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: U.S. Ambassador H. Douglas Barclay ~ via fax
 Salvadoran Ambassador Rene Antonio León Rodríguez ~ via fax
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax
 Florentín Meléndez, El Salvador member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax
 U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
 U.S. Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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