

Americas Watch Committee  
A project of the Fund  
For Free Expression  
205 East 42nd Street  
New York, New York 10017

Jim

American Civil  
Liberties Union  
122 Maryland Ave., N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL:  
11:30 A.M., January 26, 1982

Contact: Monica Andres  
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#### HUMAN RIGHTS IN EL SALVADOR

In a letter to President Reagan released today, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Americas Watch Committee urged President Reagan not to certify to Congress that the Government of El Salvador is making human rights progress. The Foreign Assistance Act, signed by the President on December 29, requires that all military assistance and sales to El Salvador must end and U.S. military personnel must be withdrawn within thirty days unless the President provides such certification.

The two organizations made the call in transmitting to the President a comprehensive 273-page "Report on Human Rights in El Salvador" documenting systematic murder, torture, and arbitrary arrests, and denial of fair trials, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of association and political rights. The report was made public today.

In the letter to President Reagan accompanying the Report,



Aryeh Neier, on behalf of the Americas Watch Committee, and Morton H. Halperin, on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, asserted that the Report demonstrates that the Government of El Salvador is "engaged in a concerted and significant effort to deprive its citizens of internationally recognized human rights," and that the Government is either directly responsible for murder and torture or is making no discernible effort to end the murder and torture.

The Report, which deals exclusively with abuses outside the context of armed combat, charges the Government of El Salvador with responsibility for:

- the great majority of some 200 politically motivated murders a week, or about 10,000 a year;
- the widespread use of torture by all branches of the nation's security forces;
- permitting paramilitary forces (ORDEN), which the Government ostensibly dissolved in 1979, to continue to operate since then with impunity, engaging in murder, mutilation and torture;
- increasing repression during 1980 and 1981 following the accession to power of the current "reform" military junta;
- issuing decrees that have stripped Salvadorans of their rights against arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention;
- the "disappearances" of more than 600 persons following their detention by security forces in the first year and a half of the present "reform" military junta;
- ending fair trials and destroying judicial independence;
- systematic repression directed against the Catholic Church;
- systematic repression directed against peasant and union leaders and opposition political leaders;
- suspending freedom of the press, closing opposition newspapers, bombing news offices and killing journalists;



- suppressing freedom of expression, assembly and association;  
and
- forcing thousands of Salvadorans to become refugees and subjecting refugees to brutal treatment.

A copy of the letter is attached.

Copies of the Report are also being distributed to Congressional leaders to whom President Reagan must certify human rights progress in El Salvador if military sales and assistance are to continue after this week.

# # #

Sponsoring organizations:

The Americas Watch Committee is a citizens' organization formed in 1981 to monitor and promote human rights throughout the Americas. It was created by the Fund for Free Expression, which created the Helsinki Watch Committee in 1979. Its principal officers are Orville Schell, Chairman, and Aryeh Neier, Vice Chairman. Messrs. Schell and Neier are also Vice Chairmen of the Helsinki Watch Committee.

The American Civil Liberties Union is a national, non-partisan organization which has worked since 1920 to defend the rights of Americans. Its membership numbers over 250,000.



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January 25, 1982

President Ronald Reagan  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

As you know, the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1981 (known as the Foreign Assistance Act) which you signed on December 29 requires that all military assistance and sales to El Salvador must end and U.S. military personnel must be withdrawn within thirty days unless you certify that certain human rights standards have been met. Accordingly, we submit to you the enclosed comprehensive "Report on Human Rights in El Salvador." In our view, it demonstrates that it would be improper for you to certify compliance.

We address ourselves to two of the conditions for certification.

Section 728(d)(1) of the Act requires that military assistance or sales may not be provided unless you certify that the Government of El Salvador "is making a concerted and significant effort to comply with internationally recognized human rights." To the contrary, this report demonstrates that the Government of El Salvador is actually engaged in a concerted and significant effort to deprive its citizens of internationally recognized human rights. Some of these deprivations are openly acknowledged by the Government of El Salvador in its decrees stripping citizens of their rights. Other deprivations have been exhaustively documented by international bodies, by the government of the United States and by Salvadoran human rights organizations.

Section 728(d)(2) of the Act requires that military assistance and sales may not be provided unless you certify that the Government of El Salvador "is achieving substantial control over all elements of its own armed forces, so as to bring to an end the indiscriminate torture and murder of Salvadoran citizens by these forces." To the contrary, this report demonstrates that the Government of El Salvador is either fully in control of all elements of its armed forces

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President Ronald Reagan  
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and is directly responsible for the indiscriminate torture and murder of Salvadoran citizens by those forces or, to the extent that it lacks control, is making no discernible effort to bring the armed forces under control for the purpose of ending torture and murder and is not criminally punishing members of the armed forces responsible for torture and murder.

In light of the evidence compiled in this report -- all of it known by the Government of the United States -- we urge you not to certify compliance with the provisions of the Act by the Government of El Salvador.

Sincerely,

*Morton H. Halperin*

Morton H. Halperin  
American Civil Liberties Union

*Aryeh Neier*

Aryeh Neier, Vice Chairman  
Americas Watch Committee

MH/AN/kgc  
Enclosure



JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY  
9TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

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March 5, 1981

Ms. Cynthia Gimbert  
29 Monadnock Street  
Dorchester, MA 02125

Dear Ms. Gimbert:

Congressman Gerry Studds has referred your letter on Guatemala to me for a response.

Central America is rapidly becoming the most volatile and politically explosive part of the world. With full scale revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador in recent months, coupled with growing unrest in Guatemala, it appears as though that fact is beyond question.

I agree with your letter concerning human rights violations occurring almost daily in Guatemala. In fact, Amnesty International has just issued a release attributing some 5,000 recent deaths to the government of Guatemalan President Romeo Lucas Garcia. The report, released to date in just capsule form, also documents the murders, kidnaps and terror that have, unfortunately, become part of the daily routine for many Guatemalan nationals.

Amnesty International's report confirms what church leaders, educators, human rights advocates, and labor organizers have been reporting for months; the police and security forces seem to be systematically wiping out the democratic grass-roots organizations in Guatemala.

I like yourself look to the Reagan Administration to bring some of these disturbing occurrences to the forefront in our nation's discussions with representatives of the Guatemalan government. I realize the Administration's position that human rights are no longer to be the sole guide in determining U.S. foreign policy, but certainly offenses of such magnitude and longevity deserve some kind of a response from the perpetrators.