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HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EL SALVADOR SINCE THE MARCH 1982 ELECTIONS

5 April Washington Post

"It's beginning again," said a Red Cross worker on his way to look at the three corpses. He was talking of the kind of death squad killing in which a point is made to leave 'execution' victims in public places. Such murders seemed to have been in decline for the past few months leading up to the elections, but in the days since the vote, bodies have been appearing once again on the roadsides."

22 April New York Times

Forty-eight members of an extended family that lived in a secluded hillside hamlet of mud. "Accounts by survivors, relatives and guerrillas vary in some details, such as the time that soldiers arrived--it was between 5:30am and 6:30am Sunday April 18 -- how many there were, and how much support the villages had given to the guerrillas. But all agreed that it was soldiers who did the killing, that most of the victims were taken out of their houses and shot, and that the victims were unarmed...According to a list the survivors have prepared, 25 of the 48 victims were children younger than 12 years old...Two of the women were pregnant. One man was about 90."

25 April New York Times

"Indeed, official and semi-official statistics, comments by diplomatic officials, and observations by reporters seem to have borne out the fears of many Salvadoreans that assassinations by Government security forces and rightist death squads would increase as the result of the success of rightist parties in the elections. A worker for the Human Rights Commission said that before elections they would find 20-25 bodies a week strewn around the perimeter of the capital. The number has risen to about 35 a week since the elections, he said. While it is not entirely clear that the level of violence has escalated, what is clear is that the violence continues. Reporters began to write about El Playon last fall. The Minister of Defense, Gen. Jose Guillermo Garcia, first denied that any bodies were being dumped there, saying that the reports resulted from 'sensationalism' by foreign correspondents. Ultimately, under pressure from angry American diplomats, Jose Napoleon Duarte, President of the ruling civilian-military government, and eventually Gen. Garcia, ordered

* Gen. Garcia has just been reconfirmed by the new Salvadorean government as Minister of Defense, a post he has held since October 1979.

investigations. Asked about those investigations recently, spokesmen for the presidency and for the armed forces said they were not aware any such investigations were being conducted. "No matter what may have been done or may have been promised, the bodies . . . are still appearing there, that's the salient point," said one American diplomat who asked that his name not be used... Since the election, 16 victims have been dumped at the cemetery at Antiguo Cascatlan. The resident said one was a woman; the rest, young men between 18 and 22 years old. The residents said the victims had been executed with a bullet in the head or chest and that many had their hands tied behind their backs by their thumb. These have traditionally been the trademarks of executions by members of the government security forces, carrying out orders from their superiors or moonlighting with the death squads... Had the Christian Democratic Party gained control of the government after the elections, they were hoping to exercise more influence over the armed forces in order to reduce human rights abuses."

27 April Homily by Bishop
Rivera y Damas

"The armed struggle continues, and we don't know when this situation of blood and death will end for the Salvadorean people. On the other hand, political assassination and repression also continue. Just during the period 29 March to 22 April, the national press reported the killing of 543 persons and 57 detentions. During just the month of March, the International Red Cross received reports of 300 cases of disappeared persons, and calls for all possible efforts to make known their whereabouts and to inform their families."

30 April Diario de las Americas
(French press agency)

Yesterday (28 April) it was revealed that the present military-civilian Junta reestablished the state of siege eight days ago, after having suspended it during the electoral period, through March 28th.

2 May Homily by Bishop
Rivera y Damas

(Regarding the armed forces offensive in Morazan)..."The people caught in these zones of conflict not only suffer the impact of the attacks of the guerrillas, but they also suffer the consequences of an indiscriminate repression in the clean-up operations that are later implemented. It's a paradox that when the people have said 'no' unequivocally to the violence that the most elemental human rights continue to be violated...On the other hand, we must end indiscriminate captures, the disappeared and the assassination of civilians. We know that of the 451 political prisoners in Mariona prison, 236 have been incarcerated for six months, one since 1979 and 34 since 1980. Of the total 451, 373 do not know their legal status.." (The legal process should be speeded up or)"better yet, the way in which all political prisoners could be freed should be studied. There should also be a call for investigation into the situation of the disappeared and the clarification of so many crimes that have remained in impunity."

5 May

Diario de las Americas
(Spanish News Agency)

"NINE DECAPITATED IN EL SALVADOR. Judicial authorities report that nine Salvadoreans were decapitated during the last 48 hours in the periphery of the capital and outlying areas of the country. According to reports, six young people were decapitated in the outskirts of Mancagua (129 kilometers to the east of San Salvador) and their heads were not found. The local tribunal was informed that the head, arms and legs had been severed from one body. Two other persons met a similar fate in Mejicanos, the north periphery of the capital, said judicial sources. In Metapan, 111 kilometers to the northeast, another decapitated body was found, indicated judicial authorities of the area."

5 May

Diario de las Americas
(UPI)

Alvaro Magana said that "an improvement in the human rights situation in El Salvador would be obtained through the defeat of the rebels. 'When the conflict is reduced to proportions of lesser importance, the problem of human rights will also be reduced.'"

(This list is not all-inclusive; rather, it refers to some cases of human rights violations as reported in the U.S. press.)

NOTE: In his October 19 81 interim report, Special Representative of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Professor Jose Antonio Pastor Ridruejo, indicated that he was not "in a position to establish, even approximately, how much responsibility lies with one or the other sector, although he has to admit to having received more abundant, precise and detailed information concerning violations of human rights imputable to members of the State apparatus and violent groups of the extreme right." (United Nations document A/36/608, p.33)