

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index:AMR 29/01/92

Distr: UA/SC

UA 15/92 Death threats

10 January 1992

EL SALVADOR

Rev. Victoriano Jimeno

Rev. Medardo Gómez and nine other members of the National Council of Churches

Eleven members of the Protestant Consejo Nacional de Iglesias (CNI), the National Council of Churches received a written death threat on 7 January from the self-styled Ejercito Secreto de Salvación Nacional, the Secret Army of National Salvation. The eleven members are:

Victoriano Jimeno	(CNI president and Episcopalian priest)
Medardo Gómez	(CNI vice-president and Lutheran bishop)
Hugo Magaña	(CNI Treasurer and Baptist Pastor)
Flora Carolina Fuentes	(Lutheran lay person)
Carlos Nájera	(Lutheran pastor)
Roberto Palacios	(CNI secretary and Reformed Church pastor)
Julio César Grande	(CNI administrator and Reformed Church member)
Ignacio Meza	(Episcopal Pastor)
Santiago Flores	(CNI Secretary General and Reformed Church Pastor)
Luis Serrano	(Episcopalian pastor)
Angel Ibarra	(Lutheran lay person)

The text of the letter reads as follows:

COMUNICADO

En nombre de la nación entera y como una muestra de que no estamos dispuestos a entregar a nuestra patria en las manos del comunismo en decadencia, estamos CONDENANDO A MUERTE a los miembros del Consejo Directivo DEL CONSEJO NACIONAL DE IGLESIAS (CNI).

Los miembros son los siguientes:

Victoriano Jimeno, Medardo Gómez, Hugo Magaña, Flora Carolina Fuentes, Carlos Nájera, Roberto Palacios, Julio César Grande, Ignacio Meza, Santiago Flores, Luis Serrano y Angel Ibarra.

Todos ellos son miembros que nuestro servicio de investigaciones ha comprobado que pertenecen al PCS y que durante toda la guerra han colaborado activamente en la búsqueda del financiamiento económico y logístico, a través de las iglesias y otros organismos afines, para con el FMLN. En tal sentido creemos que esta traición a la patria no puede quedar sin venganza.

San Salvador, 6 de enero de 1992.

*AUN PODEMOS SALVAR NUESTRA PATRIA.
EJERCITO SECRETO DE SALVACION NACIONAL*

English translation:COMMUNIQUE

In the name of the entire nation and to show that we are not willing to deliver our homeland into the hands of declining communism, we condemn to death the members of the Executive Council of the National Council of Churches (CNI). Its members are the following: Victoriano Jimeno, Medardo Gómez, Hugo Magaña, Flora Carolina Fuentes, Carlos Nájera, Roberto Palacios, Julio César Grande, Ignacio Meza, Santiago Flores,

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Luis Serrano and Angel Ibarra. All of them are members which our investigation service has proven to belong to the Salvadorian Communist Party (PCS) and who throughout the war have actively collaborated in the search for financial and logistical aid, through the churches and other related agencies, to support the FMLN. For these reasons we believe that this betrayal of our homeland cannot remain unavenged.

San Salvador, 6 January 1992
WE CAN STILL SAVE OUR HOMELAND.
SECRET ARMY OF NATIONAL SALVATION

The CNI was created in August 1991 to coordinate the pastoral work of several protestant churches in El Salvador and has been vocal in efforts towards ending the armed conflict between the government and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

Roberto Palacios had been detained for three days in November 1991 by the Guardia Nacional (National Guard) accused of using his pastoral role to generate support for the FMLN. During interrogation the National Guard threatened to "terminate" key church figures, including CNI Secretary Santiago Flores, Baptist Pastor Edgar Palacios, Catholic Archbishop Rivera y Damas and María Julia Hernández, director of Tutela Legal, the Catholic church's human rights office, whom it accused of being leaders of the FMLN.

Three days before the threat was issued, Ignacio Meza was detained by the National Guard in Cojutepeque, Cuscatlán and accused of subversive association. He claimed that his interrogators accused him of being an FMLN commander and questioned him about supposed links between the CNI and other church figures and the FMLN.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This threat comes six days after a United Nations-sponsored Peace Accord was signed by the government and the FMLN aimed at ending the 12-year-old conflict. While the identity of the Secret Army of National Salvation is unknown, the nature and circumstances of the threat and the prior arrest and interrogation of two CNI members by the National Guard, lend weight to allegations of security force involvement. Moreover the accusations against the CNI find echo in recent public statements made by sectors of the ruling ARENA party, some of whom are believed to be vehemently opposed to the reintegration of members of the armed opposition into Salvadorian society as envisaged in the Peace Accord.

The death threat against the CNI is the latest in a series of threats by clandestine groups against outspoken critics of government violations of civil, political and social rights. Recent death threats by the Salvadorian Anti-Communist Front against a trade union leader and a relief worker (see UAs 314/91 and 450/91) have not been thoroughly investigated by the authorities. Amnesty International fears that the impunity resulting from the failure

to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice could encourage further human rights violations against people perceived as government opponents.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the threats by the Secret Army of National Salvation against eleven members of the executive council of the CNI just six days after the signing of a Peace Accord, aimed amongst other things at strengthening human rights protection in El Salvador;

- urging that steps be taken to investigate the origin of the threats and to prosecute those responsible;

- expressing concern that the recurrence of such threats has been encouraged by the government's failure to carry out effective investigations into similar threats by clandestine groups in recent months.

- requesting that the authorities take measures to ensure that members of the CNI and other church workers are able to carry out their work without threat to their physical safety.

APPEALS TO:

1. Vice Minister of the Presidency:

Lic. Ernesto Altschul
Viceministro de la Presidencia
Ministerio de la Presidencia
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Sr. Viceministro Presidencia, San Salvador, El Salvador
Telex: 30344 RS SAL
Fax: (503) 22 91 09
Salutation: Viceministro/ Dear Vice Minister

2. Minister of Justice:

Dr. René Hernández Valiente
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Av. Masferrer No. 612-b
Colonia Lomas Verde
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, San Salvador, El Salvador
Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

3. Attorney for Human Rights:

Lic. José David Campos
Fiscal Adjunto de Derechos Humanos
Fiscalía General de la República
13a Calle Poniente
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Fiscalía General, San Salvador, El Salvador
Salutation: Sr Fiscal General/ Dear Attorney General

4. Minister of Defence:

Gral. René Emilio Ponce
Ministro de Defensa
Ministerio de Defensa y de Seguridad Pública
Km. 5 Carretera a Sta Tecla
San Salvador, El Salvador
Telegrams: Ministro Defensa San Salvador, El Salvador
Telex: 20446 MINDEF
Fax: (503) 22 85 14
Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Governmental Human Rights Commission:

Comision de Derechos Humanos, gubernamental
Paseo Gral. Escalón 87
Av. Sur Bloque 2, 226
Colonia Escalón
San Salvador, El Salvador
Fax: (503) 24 09 92

National Council of Churches:

Consejo Nacional de Iglesias
Apartado Postal 2241
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: (503) 24-1461

Human Rights Department, Lutheran Synod:

Sínodo Luterano Salvadoreño

Departamento de Derechos Humanos

Edificio Buenos Aires, Apt. 9

Calle Buenos Aires

Barrio San Miguelito

San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: (503) 25-1123

and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 February 1992.