



A terrorist regime:

Salvadorean government suppresses human rights

opinion

by Juan Carranza

El Salvador, the smallest Central American nation, with a population of five million people, has experienced a brutal internal war for the last nine years with a human cost of 70,000 lives. It is often referred to as a civil war by the mass media, but technically it is not. The conflict, between left-wing guerrillas Farabundo Marti Nation Liberation Front (FMLN) and the ultra right-wing armed forces of the Salvadorean Government, is not a confrontation of two civilian fronts.

Experts agree the war in El Salvador has lasted this long due to the military support the Salvadorean government receives from the United States — close to \$2,000,000 U.S. per day (an annual figure that easily exceeds El Salvador's gross national product).

However, despite the infinite number of human rights violations by the Salvadorean government forces and its paramilitary death squads, the U.S. government continues to fund them. The U.S. administration believes the only way to prevent the spreading of "evil communism" is by eliminating the left-wing opponents of the Salvadorean government. As a result, the ultra-right wing government of El Salvador has taken it upon itself to eliminate any person whom it perceives as an opponent, be that person an opponent or not. In addition, the government has also engaged in a barbaric

campaign of terror to discourage any possible opposition or public dissent.

This campaign of terror, however, has been unable to silence the international outcry and condemnation of the Salvadorean government's tactics and the violation of basic human rights. As a result of this highly successful international influence, the U.S. administration has taken the position that it will not fund the Salvadorean government unless it adheres to international human rights standards and seeks a peaceful solution to the conflict with the guerrillas.

In view of these restrictions, the Salvadorean government's armed forces have ridiculously tried to change its image by denying its participation in the death squads, and by passing itself off as a willing negotiator. As a test to the government's "good faith," the FMLN guerrillas took advantage of the government's apparent willingness to negotiate and, on a number of occasions, did voluntarily and unilaterally cease fire so as to promote a peaceful environment in which to conduct the bargaining.

However, negotiations between the two fronts have proven to be nothing more than a public image scam by the Salvadorean government to meet the U.S. administration's restrictions for military support.

At recent peace talks in October, the Salvadorean government demonstrated, one more time, its true character and its true intentions. It has denied every proposal made by the guerrillas and has not been willing to

compromise on any of its own proposals.

In addition, the Salvadorean government has used the peace talks as a shield from international attention to intensify its campaign of terror by the kidnapping of university students, teachers, the bombing of the home of Ruben Zamora (the leader of the opposition party), and savage attacks to other perceived opposition groups. These attacks culminated in the bombings, by the high command of the armed forces, of the offices of the National Federation of Salvadorean Workers Union and the offices of the Mothers' Committee of Prisoners and the Disappeared on October 31, 1989, leaving 36 people injured and 10 dead.

As a result, in retaliation to the escalation of terrorist tactics by the government forces, on November 11, the FMLN launched its strongest offensive in the nine years of war. The FMLN managed to control a great number of strategic points throughout the country, including two thirds of the capital city. In view of the guerrillas' successful offensive, the government's armed forces stepped up the war by the indiscriminate bombing of densely populated neighbourhoods in the capital city of San Salvador, in the blind hope of eliminating the rebels, without any concern for the security of the civilian population.

In fact, the government forces' aerial bombing of the city caused the deaths of hundreds of innocent residents and injured more than 3,000, not to mention the total destruction of

thousands of family homes.

To aggravate the situation, the military intensified its campaign of terror by persecuting, kidnapping, torturing, killing and mutilating perceived opponents of the government, including six Jesuit priests who formed the faculty executive of the University of Central America, (UCA).

These latest killings have sent waves of shock around the world. Even the Vatican could not overlook the barbaric assassination of the Jesuit professors at the UCA.

But despite the atrocities perpetrated by the Salvadorean government forces, the U.S. government has increased its military support to the Salvadorean government's armed forces, in the blind hope it will eradicate the "evil communists," while voluntarily shutting its own eyes to the psychopathic mass killings of civilians by the Salvadorean army. Conservative estimates state that more than 1,500 people were killed in the week of November 13-19. Most of them by bullets and bombs made in the U.S.

The killings of Salvadorean civilians by the indiscriminate bombing of the capital city of San Salvador reflects the fanatic pursuit of the Salvadorean government and that of the U.S. to rid Latin America of the red menace. The U.S. justifies its military intervention in the name of democracy. But if democracy is really what the U.S. is fighting for, would its purposes not best be served by its intervention in a country where suffrage is denied to the majority? South Africa perhaps?