

Torture

Acceded: 17 June 1996.

El Salvador's initial report was due 16 July 1997.

Rights of the Child

Signed: 26 January 1990; ratified: 10 July 1990.

El Salvador's second periodic report was due 1 September 1997.

THEMATIC REPORTS**Mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights**

Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/1998/68, paras. 14, 15, 17, 39, 61; E/CN.4/1998/68/Add.1, paras. 154–163)

The report states that according to information received, paramilitary groups and/or clandestine groups similar to those which were active in the 1980s and early 1990s, have reappeared in recent years in El Salvador. These groups, which are allegedly fomenting violence and social unrest in the country, are said to be acting with the acquiescence of the authorities despite the fact that their links with the latter may not be as clear as in the past. The groups are reported to include the Major Roberto d'Aubuisson Nationalist Force (FURODA), which emerged in June 1996 and has threatened public figures, journalists, and religious leaders. A second group, Sombra Negra, is reported to have appeared in December 1994 with the avowed objective of combatting crime and acting as a social cleansing squad. The members of Sombra Negra remain unknown, yet several sources have alleged that they are former soldiers, who may be acting with the acquiescence of the National Civil Police (PNC). Sombra Negra is said to be responsible for the deaths, between December 1994 and April 1995, of 17 persons, all allegedly criminals. The Special Rapporteur (SR) also referred to the existence of other clandestine armed groups, including the Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Organization against Crime, the People United against Crime Movement (PUCD) and the Provisional Anti Crime Executive Command (CEAT).

The government provided detailed information on cases that had been transmitted by the SR in 1996. The responses indicated: the cases were still being investigated, but the persons responsible for the deaths had not yet been identified; it had not been possible to identify those responsible for the death and the case had been shelved; investigations were continuing and officers of the PNC had been identified as the likely culprits; investigations were continuing and soldiers of the armed forces had been identified as the likely culprits; the person accused of causing the death, an officer of the municipal police of Nueva San Salvador (Cuerpo de Agentes metropolitanos) received a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment and was ordered to pay relatives of the deceased the sum of 10,000 colones; a sergeant in the PNC had been charged and ordered to be placed in custody; the person accused had been tried and acquitted;

the person identified as responsible for the death did not belong to any police force or to any other state agency; investigations had been completed by the Criminal Court of the Judicial District of Quezaltepeque, and, no person or group had been identified specifically as being responsible for the deaths but, in view of the seriousness of the case, if those responsible could be identified they would be subject to criminal prosecution.

FIELD OPERATIONS

The OHCHR Technical Cooperation Office in El Salvador was established in April 1997 with headquarters located in San Salvador. Florentin Melendez, Director, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in El Salvador, 3calle Poniente y Pje 1 No. 4746, Colonia Escalon, San Salvador, El Salvador; Phone: (503) 264-1291; 263-6403; 263-6404; Fax: (503) 264-1292; 263-6360; e-mail: acnudhes@sal.gbm.net.

As a follow-up to a recommendation of the Commission on Human Rights, in January 1997, the government and the OHCHR signed two technical cooperation agreements, the first on "Human Rights training and documentation" and the second on "Police and human rights". The estimated duration of the technical cooperation agreements is two years. The Office comprises six professional staff — the Director, a human rights training specialist, a legal advisor, a national gender and women's rights advisor, a national human rights expert, an international police advisor — and three support staff. The OHCHR-El Salvador is mandated to: consolidate the human rights protection system for the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law and guarantee to the population the effective protection and full enjoyment of their rights and fundamental freedoms; and, consolidate the public security model, within the framework of the rule of law, through the promotion of the application of the international human rights standards by law enforcement officials.

The main activities carried out as of August 1998 included:

- ♦ legislation reform — support to the Legislative Assembly/Women, Minor and Family Commission to adapt domestic legislation to international human rights norms, in particular the norms relating to women and minors;
- ♦ strengthening national institutions — organization of intensive specialized human rights training courses, seminars and workshops for law enforcement officials, armed forces and penitentiary personnel at different levels; monthly study-sessions with the teachers of the police academy (previously trained by the OHCHR), aimed at providing them with the tools necessary to develop and implement all their courses using an integrated rights approach;
- ♦ extensive training on how to treat victims of violence, offered to both governmental and non-governmental representatives of the 12 institutions that coordinate