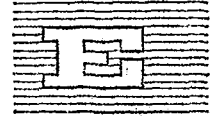


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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER
DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN EL SALVADOR

Note by the Secretary-General

On the request of the Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations Office at Geneva, the attention of the Commission is drawn to the comments of the Government of El Salvador on the interim report of the Special Representative of the Commission, submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session in accordance with Commission resolution 32 (XXXVII) (A/36/608).

Comments of the Government of El Salvador on the interim report of
the Special Representative on the situation of human rights in
El Salvador (A/36/608)

This document contains the preliminary comments by El Salvador on the interim report prepared by Mr. José Antonio Pastor Ridruejo, and contained in document A/36/608, dated 28 October 1981.

In view of the provisional nature of the report, the present reply does not claim to be exhaustive, but makes general comments, criticisms and remarks, so that they will be taken into due consideration.

The document in question contains unfounded statements, judgements that are biased or distort the facts, misused information and an approach marked by interference in the internal affairs of El Salvador. It is also based on resolutions which suffer from serious defects and have, without exception, been rejected by the Salvadorian Government. In this connection, El Salvador has not recognized the appointment of Mr. Pastor Ridruejo as Special Representative and, although it did not refuse to allow him to visit El Salvador or stand in the way of contacts with officials with whom he wished to speak or deny him access to the places he wished to visit, the reason being that it favours dialogue and the transmittal of correct information, this does not mean that there has been any change in that legal position. Consequently, the Government of El Salvador does not regard it as a valid document, but it has been submitted, and cannot be disregarded, more particularly because it contains serious errors and inaccuracies as well as hasty and unacceptable conclusions.

Another reason for this reply is the fact that El Salvador is also the object of a broad campaign of disinformation and denunciation waged by interventionist organizations and Governments which are vainly seeking to destabilize the Salvadorian Government, a campaign that includes the sponsoring of resolutions and reports hostile to it, thereby simply making use of the United Nations, normally in connection with the topic of human rights and ostensibly on humanitarian grounds. The use of the United Nations as a political weapon must be unmasked and it is imperative to note that, just as this activity is being directed towards El Salvador today, it has consistently been confined to situations involving Latin American countries, something which has already been denounced by a number of Governments. It means that organs of the United Nations are being forced to adopt an interventionist attitude and, also to act in a discriminatory manner, contrary to the universalism embodied in its Charter.

However, the Salvadorian Government is confident that truth will triumph and that the role of the Organization will ultimately prevail in the context of the purposes and principles for which it was established and in which it reaffirms its international credo; through its well-meaning criticism, the Government hopes to serve it with dedication and integrity.

It is appropriate, at the outset, to draw attention to some of the procedural errors made in respect of the interim report.

In requesting a Special Representative to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at this session, the Commission on Human Rights was guilty of a serious irregularity, since it placed a document in the hands of the Assembly before the Commission itself had taken cognizance of it, thus bypassing an established body. Strictly speaking, the Commission should simply have informed the Assembly that it had begun consideration of the item and had appointed a Special Representative; next, it should have awaited the report produced by him and only then have expressed an opinion on its substantive aspects and transmitted its own conclusions to the General Assembly. However, the Commission not only introduced this conflicting element but also, at one and the same time, made substantive judgements, and in so doing committed an error similar to that made in connection with the resolution adopted last year by the Assembly, in which it first gave an opinion on a situation it was to investigate later.

By these actions, the Commission on Human Rights and the Assembly have deviated from their mandate, purposes and functions. Consequently, the only course for the General Assembly, at this session, would be to take note of the interim report, because if it expresses an opinion on the substantive matters, it disrupts the legal structure shaped by the organs and the steps involved. We wish to stress that it was for the Commission to inform the Assembly of its conclusions and recommendations at the proper time, and not the Special Representative, who is responsible to the Commission and was expressly required to submit his findings to the Commission itself. In this regard, reference may be made to operative paragraph 7(c) of Commission resolution 32 (XXXVII). From the outset, everything has been done contrary to established order and logic and in disregard of normal procedures and good sense.

In paragraph 5 of his interim report, Mr. Pastor Ridruejo acknowledges that during his visit, the Government extended its full co-operation to him and allowed him complete freedom of action and movement, and he states that in addition to his other activities, he had interviews with senior authorities in El Salvador. Unfortunately, the Government's helpfulness is hardly reflected at all in the body of the report, which draws only marginally on these sources, in contrast to the extensive coverage it gives to information from individuals and organizations of the radicalized opposition.

A few examples will suffice. When Mr. Pastor Ridruejo discusses the agrarian reform undertaken in El Salvador, he bases himself on mainly a paper entitled "El Salvador and Land Reform 1980-81" by Simon and Stevens, the only one known to be critical of the process of agrarian reform in El Salvador.

The question is taken up in paragraphs 41 to 50 of the report, which includes a very small amount of ECLA data, but unfortunately neither the subject-matter of his interview with Dr. José Antonio Morales Erhlich, Chairman of the Salvadorian Institute for Agrarian Reform and a member of the Revolutionary Government Junta, nor the documented information obtained during the visit have been reflected in it. Again, it makes no reference whatsoever to the information that was supplied to him unofficially in Geneva and consisted, inter alia, of brochures containing official data on agrarian reform. Indeed, the Government wonders whether

its helpfulness to Mr. Pastor Ridruejo has served any purpose. The report implies a kind of divorce between the Government and the peasants, who are the people that benefit from the agrarian reform. Suffice it to say that the Chairman of the Salvadorian Communal Union, a rural organization with over 200,000 members, was the Chairman of the Salvadorian Institute for Agrarian Reform until he was murdered by extremists hostile to this far-reaching programme, which is one of the keystones of social change in El Salvador. That organization continues to form the backbone of agrarian reform and, as such, plays a decisive role in the process. It must be remembered that the agrarian reform in El Salvador is the most thorough of its kind on the American continent. Consequently, it would have been desirable for the report to present a comprehensive view of the question through visits to rural co-operatives and their leaders. In short, the Government rejects the attitude taken towards the agrarian reform and the author's unjustified assertions that it was accompanied by repression of the rural inhabitants, as noted in paragraph 45 without mentioning any source. How strange, since the expropriated landholders, the people directly affected by the reform, were precisely the ones who protested about Government coercive action.

As to social and economic reform, in paragraph 40 the author of the report mentions the Junta's intention of undertaking the nationalization of the banking system and foreign trade, but fails to point out that this aim was fully achieved over a year ago and the system now operates accordingly. This proves that the social reforms are irreversible.

Another example occurs in paragraph 98, when Mr. Pastor Ridruejo refers to information and explanations given by the competent authorities of the Republic of El Salvador regarding the difficulties which prevent the normal functioning of justice in the present situation of widespread violence.

If we compare the above with paragraph 5, we see that he had interviews with judges of the Supreme Court, the Minister of Justice and Government Attorney. Mr. Pastor Ridruejo should have been able to conclude from these interviews that there is serious concern about respect for human rights and about the difficulties in investigating cases as a result of the state of violence, and that there is a widespread desire to improve arrangements for administering justice and to strengthen the appropriate executive and judicial organs. This contrasts with the assertion in paragraph 115, in the form of a moral conviction, that the executive and judicial organs have adopted an attitude of passivity and inactivity, thereby erroneously implying that a deliberate policy is involved.

The concern experienced by the organs of the State in connection with the administration of the human rights system might have been clear to him from factors such as the broad scope of the law which he describes in chapter II. This concern is apparent in particular in the ratification by the Revolutionary Government Junta of the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights in the framework of the United Nations.

Such concern might also have been obvious to him had he been aware of the efforts deployed by the Ministry of Justice in matters relating to the prison system and in elaborating laws and arrangements for minors in El Salvador.

Such concern might have been plain for him to see from the contents of paragraph 100 of the report, which describes the Government's actions even against members of the armed forces. If there was no concern, how could a considerable number of the members of the security forces have been expelled, handed over to the courts and arrested? Is this a passive attitude?

The Government reiterates its concern to improve the human rights situation in El Salvador and rejects any contention that its attitude is one of passivity or inactivity. The Government of El Salvador understands and is aware of its legal and moral responsibility in this matter. Otherwise, if it did not feel such deep concern, the Salvadorian Government's attitude would obviously not be so positive and open, unlike the attitude of other Governments; this is demonstrated in paragraph 80, which states that the Government authorities have allowed staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit, without notice, all permanent or temporary, civilian or military detention centres and to interview all the prisoners without any officials in attendance.

This attitude has enabled the International Committee of the Red Cross to do a great deal of work in El Salvador, where it operates freely, in conformity with the authorization it has received. Its humanitarian endeavours are fully supported by the Government. This is so because it is dealing with a State which cares about the human rights situation. This is so because the State does not murder, kidnap or torture political prisoners. The International Committee of the Red Cross has lists of all persons who have been arrested. The humanitarian concern to prevent any ill-treatment of prisoners is demonstrated by the permission granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit any detention centre when it wishes to and to talk to all the prisoners, without any officials in attendance. In view of these facts, which are mentioned in the report, it is unfortunate that the report does not draw the logical conclusions. A grievous situation of violence does indeed exist in El Salvador. However, the Government is aware of its obligations, is deeply concerned and is anxious to secure peace, harmony and full application of the law, with which it complies and to which it subordinates its officials.

In order to demonstrate the Government's positive and responsible attitude, we venture to quote, in the proper context, from the ICRC's report on its activities for 1980, in which the chapter on its work in El Salvador states on page 29:

"An agreement was signed on 12 December between the El Salvador Government and the ICRC officially establishing the headquarters of a delegation in the country.

"Protection

"PERSONS DETAINED FOR SECURITY REASONS - At the end of February the governing Junta renewed the general authorization to visit all places of detention. This enabled the ICRC to continue its activities for the protection of persons detained as a result of events (the first series of visits had taken place in autumn 1979). These visits were resumed on 17 March and since the end of June, after the delegation staff was increased, were carried out at regular intervals. Both in San Salvador

and in the provinces, ICRC staff visited places controlled by the Ministry of Justice, the National Guard, the Customs Police, the National Police and military barracks. Special attention was given to places of detention controlled by security forces of the police and National Guard, and such places were visited once or twice a week. The ICRC was especially concerned with detainees under interrogation. The main purpose of the ICRC's visits was in fact to see and register the detainees as fast as possible after their arrest in order to ensure some degree of protection for them.

"In 1980 ICRC delegates had access to 95 places of detention (including 4 hospitals) in which there were 544 security detainees. Confidential reports were sent to the El Salvador authorities.

"The ICRC also enquired into the fate of combatants who had surrendered to the authorities after the amnesty offer made on 25 October, but as the first visits showed, no special activities were required on their behalf.

"HOSTAGES - As in 1979, the welfare of civilians held as hostages by opposition groups continued to cause concern for the ICRC.

"On 15 January the ICRC accordingly appealed to the kidnappers of the South African Ambassador to respect the basic humanitarian principles and offered its services as a neutral intermediary. It specifically stated, however, that it would not take part in negotiations for his release, and that its intervention would be for a solely humanitarian purpose. The ICRC was unable to obtain permission to visit the South African Ambassador, despite repeated requests.

"In 1980 various opposition movements occupied premises (embassies, government buildings, etc.) and took hostage the people there. the ICRC intervened in certain cases at the request of one of the parties and with the agreement of all concerned. It acted in close collaboration with El Salvador Red Cross. A medical delegate spoke to the hostages without any witness present, examined the conditions of detention and demanded the release of certain persons for reasons of ill-health: a number were released as a result. He also maintained contact between the hostages and their families.

"CIVILIAN POPULATION - With the help of the El Salvador Red Cross, the ICRC took charge of several operations to remove groups of civilians caught up in the hostilities to areas of greater safety.

"It also intervened on behalf of some 200 civilians who had sought shelter in July, together with members of the 'Popular Leagues of 28 February', in the Costa Rica Embassy in San Salvador and were

requesting political asylum. These refugees included a large number of women and children, which led the ICRC to ask the El Salvador Government to refrain from any action which might endanger the lives of the occupants should the Costa Rica Government decide to transfer its embassy elsewhere, in which case the diplomatic immunity of the occupied embassy would cease to be recognized. At the same time steps were taken to provide assistance in collaboration with the El Salvador Red Cross. A peaceful solution was ultimately found".

In the light of this unchallengeable testimony by the International Committee of the Red Cross, does not the conduct of the senior authorities of the State speak for itself?

The report devotes no more than five paragraphs, from 90 to 94, to the subject of terrorism in general.

It should be stressed that it is public knowledge in El Salvador that 25 mayors and 40 municipal aldermen belonging to the Christian Democrat Party have been assassinated.

El Salvador is suffering from an acute outbreak of terrorism which is being used by extremist organizations as a means of destroying the national economy and destabilizing the Government in order to seize power. This is being done after the resounding failure of their calls for a general strike and their campaign of war, which culminated in an unsuccessful final offensive in January of this year. Their disregard for human life is all too obvious in the many "vigilante raids" and attacks, with enormous losses in human lives. The Government of El Salvador finds itself compelled to face up to those activities, which are causing anguish throughout the land.

Paragraph 94 of the report quotes an explanation of the terrorism, from a document which states that neither the Frente de Liberación Farabundo Martí nor the Frente Democrático Revolucionario deny acts of economic sabotage, although such acts are presented by those organizations as being directed against the economic infrastructure of the oligarchy and never against the Salvadorian people. This clumsy explanation is not only a confession of their deeds, but also a bogus repudiation of the fact that their efforts to bring about the economic breakdown of the country have a direct and harmful impact on all sectors of the Salvadorian population and that the economic alliance of the oligarchy was smashed by the reforms.

A clandestine radio transmitting from foreign territory broadcasts reports on acts of terror and violence for which those organizations claim responsibility and justify themselves. An instance of an extremely ambitious terrorist act which recently caused consternation in El Salvador was the dynamiting of one of its most important public works, the Puente de Oro bridge over the River Lempa. Immediately after this outrage, the Salvadorian Catholic Church reiterated its condemnation of acts of sabotage and the Archbishop, Monsignor Arturo Rivera y Damas, said that public works are for everyone and should not be touched.

It is all too plain from this that the interim report says very little about the phenomenon of terrorism, which is the main reason for the anxiety, the affliction and the harm in El Salvador.

The overwhelming majority of Salvadorians, who have no ties or sympathy with the extremist organizations, know, feel and say that terrorism is the main cause of the anxiety, the affliction and the harm in El Salvador. This is the truth which rarely comes out in the international press. This is the reason why the Salvadorian people have withheld their support from these organizations in their calls for strikes and in their armed attacks. This is the reason why they will not be able to achieve their ambition to seize power, because the Salvadorian people reject their methods of fighting. In contrast, it should be noted that the people thronged the stadiums in the Republic for the national celebrations on 15 September in a display of public spiritedness and repudiation of terrorism. The Salvadorian people ardently desire peace. An outstanding example of this attitude of the population occurred recently at the start of a match in the National Stadium between the National Football Team and an Argentine club. Attacks with dynamite plunged the Stadium into darkness and the thousands of persons present, instead of giving way to panic, stayed in their places and sang the national anthem in the semi-darkness until the electricity supply was restored a few minutes later and the match went on. Instead of the sorrow and the deaths that terror and panic could have caused, the occasion was yet another token of the national will for peace, which is the subject of the national anthem.

Perhaps the brevity of his visit and his lack of contact with the various sectors of the Salvadorian population prevented Mr. Pastor Ridruejo from grasping this keen patriotism and conveying it in his report.

There is another matter to which we should like to draw attention. The report, in an excess of zeal, contains judgements which disregard the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States. It will be remembered that, in this respect, Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations states:

" ...

7. Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State" ...

Despite this, the author gives his views on the current political situation in the Republic of El Salvador, formulates opinions and makes suggestions regarding the political management of a sovereign State, something which is improper.

With regard to our view that the report misuses information, in this instance by over-reliance on doubtful sources, it is worth while noting that out of the report's 76 quotations with foot-notes, 21 refer to data taken from "Legal Aid". Accordingly, since 27.6 per cent, or more than one quarter of the quotations in the entire report are taken from this body, it is important to ascertain what it is, as well as its nature and its role in the Salvadorian political context, in order to determine whether the report has an acceptable basis.

The Government of El Salvador has no hesitation in stating that this body is an affiliate of the radicalized left-wing opposition movements; its information therefore lacks objectivity and, what is more, it communicates distorted or exaggerated data intended to discredit the Salvadorian Government.

The Spanish title of the book to which foot-note 14 refers ends with the words "Justicia Insurreccional del Socorro Jurídico" (Insurreccional Justice of Legal Aid). From this phrase alone, anyone can see that Legal Aid is working as an instrument of insurrection and not as a legal or humanitarian agency.

A number of important statements concerning Legal Aid by the highest representatives of the Catholic Church in El Salvador reliably establish that Legal Aid is conducting a political campaign. They reject its right to speak on behalf of the Church and urge it to confine its role to the legal framework beyond which it has strayed. It is obvious that Legal Aid maintains complete silence about the terrorist activities of the guerrilla movements and, what is more, is using its resources in an attempt to distort the image of the Government through mendacious and fake information.

In New York City, according to a UPI dispatch of 20 November, Bishop Pedro Aparicio, the Vice-Chairman of the Salvadorian Episcopal Conference, accompanied by Monsignor Freddy Dalgado, its Secretary, made public statements in which, inter alia, he said "We have this group called Legal Aid, which is leftist and is blind to what the guerrilla fighters are doing" (see also the New York newspaper, La Prensa, 22 November 1981).

According to a quotation from page 6 of the New York newspaper, Noticias del Mundo, of 25 November, the same priest, speaking on behalf of the Episcopal Conference, said that the Marxist-inspired Legal Aid in El Salvador is giving the world statistics on persons who have died, but in such a way as to convey the impression that it is the Government that has killed them.

There can be no doubt about this, if one bears in mind that a recent ACAN/EFE dispatch about the Archbishop of El Salvador, Monsignor Arturo Rivera y Damas, said the following: "Rivera y Damas today accused Legal Aid publications of being "one-sided". He recalled his sermon of 31 May last, when he said that the only persons who may speak on behalf of the Archdiocese are the Bishop, the Vicars General when they are representing the Bishop, and the Secretariat for Social Communication, when it seeks to express the thinking of the Bishop.

"No other office or organization connected with the Archdiocese is its official or unofficial spokesman" declared the prelate, who said that he was compelled to remind Legal Aid that its function was eminently legal and technical and that it must consequently restrict its activities to that field alone.

Furthermore, on page A.10 of The New York Times of 24 November 1981 an article by Mr. Raymond Bonner under the heading "Salvador Parties Begin Campaigning" quotes Legal Aid as saying in a statement it had issued the previous week: "At the present moment, there do not exist in the country the conditions to begin the electoral process". This statement clearly confirms that Legal Aid is a political rather than a humanitarian body, with the same political views as the FDR/FMLIN.

Everyone in El Salvador is aware of this.

The Salvadorian Government therefore denies that information from this source has any validity and rejects the figures and the statements obtained from it, which some people might think the report appears to endorse.

As to the self-styled El Salvador Commission on Human Rights, which the report quotes eight times, it is also worth drawing attention to its bias and its affiliation with the FDR/TMLN, which anyone can gather simply by reading any of its publications. Everyone in El Salvador is aware of this too.

It is striking that only three foot-notes refer to information supplied by the Government of El Salvador.

In order to make the crisis in El Salvador more understandable, we believe that it is appropriate to give some extracts from the speech made on 2 December 1980 by José Napoleón Duarte, President of the Revolutionary Government Junta, which reads as follows:

"A wave of violence has been unleashed in El Salvador by those who have kept the country in a state of terror for 50 years and those who, for the past ten years, have believed that violence is the only way out. So they have tried to enforce a scheme that goes against the wishes of the people and they want to do it by fire and sword. The extreme left is killing and murdering to reach power and this time they have even forgotten the reasons for the people's struggle for so many years. They have forgotten that the people wanted social change, wanted agrarian reform and other reforms.

"The extremists are showing that all they want is power to destroy everything and then set up a totalitarian régime.

"At the same time, this has produced the same reaction among those who are unwilling to give way, and when the army rose up on 15 October so as to offer the country a way out and secure social changes and a democratic process, those groups then unleashed extraordinary violence. This way they created the panorama of violence and death that we all reject, the deaths that take place when a guerrilla band reaches a village and, taking the law into its own hands, executes a person simply because he has belonged to the PCN or ORDEN, without realizing that ideas cannot be fought by killing and that people must not be murdered because of their convictions.

"This is what we reject and we also condemn what has been done by those other gentlemen who wipe out the ones they consider their enemies, calling them communists and drawing up lists and then moving on to kill. This is also condemned by all Salvadorians and, needless to say, by those of us in the Revolutionary Government Junta".

What does the authoritative voice of the Catholic Church have to say about the phenomenon of violence in El Salvador?

We shall refer to the Pastoral Letter of the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador published on 15 September 1980, which states:

"In this hour of grief and tragedy, when we are threatened by the spectre of irrational and blind violence operating with impunity and in secrecy, in this hour of confusion and moral decline, of crisis in values and fanatical bitterness, hatred and vengeance. When we see with horror that dishonesty, cowardice, treachery, perfidy and crime are elevated into virtues, we are overcome by anguish and are tempted to ask ourselves if there is hope in this vortex of madness that threatens to engulf us in a blood-bath.

"The state of violence to which we have alluded is partly a legacy of the past which, with its burden of injustice, has produced a reaction of resentment and distrust among many Salvadorians. In addition, the insidious inroads by international communism and the violent reaction of the extreme right are systematically undermining every governmental or private initiative to rectify the errors of the past.

"This choice of violence has led to gunmen trying to gain power by violence and to use terror to enforce the ideology of the groups on the extreme left or to defend the interests of the extreme right.

"Once it is unleashed, violence becomes ever more irrational and difficult to contain. In the climate of social tension in which we have been living, along with the gunmen we have spoken of, gangs of thieves and armed groups have sprung up and kill for reasons of animosity, abuse of power or selective repression, at times with a cruelty so bewildering as to reveal the hatred which has been smouldering and is now breaking out in a degrading and shameful way.

"This violence by the extremists is also creating a climate of tension, ranging from the telephone call demanding support for a particular group to armed attacks to plunder, burn and destroy the property of individuals, industrial enterprises, banks, buses, markets, crops, plantations, and so on. It is producing a desperate situation that is forcing large numbers of the rural population to flee from their towns and cantons, either to neighbouring countries or further inside the Republic, far from their homes.

"But there is another powerful factor that has helped to maintain and aggravate the situation of violence in El Salvador. This factor is disproportionate and maliciously distorted international propaganda, and an unfair internationalization of our problem to serve geo-political interests. These factors, situations and attitudes, which conspire against peace and keep our people in oppression, tension and fear, must be denounced boldly and resolutely by those of us who profess to be members of the Church of Christ, which shares His charisma for prophecy.

"It is not superfluous, at this juncture, for us to call attention once again to the serious problem of violence. Decisions upon which the country's future depends cannot be left to the whims of emotion and passion - we repeat as was said at the Medellin Conference (2.15) - nor can violence be a means of liberation and of altering structures. Active participation in politics, which is every citizen's right, must not be confused with militancy in groups or parties which make violence the only means of changing society.

"In conclusion, we wish to make a few proposals which summarize our position as Bishops of El Salvador in the present serious political crisis.

"1. We ask those who have taken up arms to end the violence, repression and terrorism and to give way to dialogue in the interests of the welfare of the majority. One cannot defend the people by attacking the people.

"2. On the basis of the teachings of the Church, we offer our co-operation in any course leading to peace and we reject violence as being incompatible with the Gospel and the establishment of a lasting peace."

This assessment is by the senior ecclesiastical hierarchy and does not represent the official position of the Government of El Salvador. However, a comparison of the ideas expressed in the Bishops' Pastoral Letter with the interim report shows that the report lacks balance and objectivity when viewed in the light of the Salvadorian Bishops' assessment of the country's situation.

On Tuesday, 10 November 1981, an ACAN-EFE dispatch reported on statements by the General Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador, Monsignor Freddy Delgado, who gave the position of the Salvadorian Church in an exclusive interview for La Prensa Gráfica on 9 November. I venture to quote this dispatch:

"The fact that an inter-party forum has been arranged with the participation of six political parties means - as I see it - that the electoral process is fairly and squarely under way. The people are starting to take an interest in the elections and are already airing their likes and dislikes of certain political factions. This is different from our usual topic in the past: terrorism and violence. The people want to express their wishes through genuinely free elections. In this way, the world will discover what the real Salvadorian people want, the objectives of the various political factions in the contest will be revealed and it will be possible to see whether they really represent the people. The participation of our people in public life will have to lead to an open dialogue between the various political trends, and this will be the first step towards securing the peace that everybody longs for. The guerrilla groups - we Salvadorians all know and they themselves have admitted it - no longer have the ability to seize power by force and this is why, throughout the country, they have turned to terrorism in all its guises, destroying, murdering, inflicting damage and the like".

We believe it important to have reproduced these views because they explain the situation in El Salvador properly and impartially.

The Government of El Salvador is engaged in a process of democratization and social justice. To this end, the Government is promoting elections and social and economic changes despite all the adverse circumstances. This commitment is founded on a deeply Christian spirit which seeks to encourage peace.

The Government rejects any over-all assessment of an inquisitorial kind which contains an inadequate picture of the real situation in El Salvador and ignores the régime's firm will to encourage respect for the law and the efforts it is making in the face of social injustice and a past of political oppression. It is not true that the hopes roused by the Proclamation of 15 October have been dashed. On the contrary, the text of the Proclamation stands as the basic framework for the activities of the State and, far from having fallen into disuse, has been reiterated in reaffirmation of the commitment to the people to move ahead with activities to help the dispossessed masses in the pursuit of justice and democracy.

In conclusion, for the reasons set out above, the Government rejects the interim report, which also reflects the biased approach of a hostile international press and organizations which, like Amnesty International, campaign skilfully to depict the Salvadorian Government as one that opposes the people and publish comments and accusations which the report has incorporated indiscriminately and abundantly.

Any implication which, by inference from what is stated in the report, might be used against the Salvadorian Government on human rights issues must be categorically rejected once and for all.

The Commission should not take a decision on the basis of the interim report; the proper course would be to take note of its submission and of this reply.