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# **Movement Support Network**

*An Anti-Repression Project of the Center for Constitutional Rights in cooperation with the National Lawyers Guild*

## INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL HARASSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES

5-14-88

A sanctuary church in Phoenix, AZ was broken into for the third time. The front door had been forced and doors to the pastor's office and the sanctuary office had been kicked in. Files and drawers were disturbed but nothing of value was taken. Other offices were not entered. The church has a long history as the object of political harassment and is currently involved in litigation against the INS. `B `1030 `AZ `S `2

4-19-88

A death threat note was slipped through the mail slot of the door to the Los Angeles office of UNTS, National Unity of Salvadoran Workers Support Committee. It was addressed to the woman coordinator and threatened to "cut off heads," and to rape her. The note was signed, "E.M.L.A. MHM." (Esquadron de la Muerte Los Angeles Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez). `R `500 `CA `CA `2

4-7-88

A death threat was mailed to the office of CRECEN in Los Angeles. It named four Salvadoran members and said they were all going to die. The note was signed, "Esquadron de la Muerte en el exterior, Maximiliano Martinez Hernandez." Named after a general responsible for the 1930s massacre of peasants, the Maximiliano Martinez Hernandez brigade is one of El Salvador's most active death squads. `R `490 `CA `CA `2

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May 1988

**7th Floor**  
666 Broadway, NY, NY 10012

**Hotline**  
(212) 614-6422

3-6-88

A sanctuary church and its annex in Anaheim, California, were forcibly broken into. The annex houses the offices of the pastor, a refugee resource center and a welfare coalition. All mail was taken from mailboxes and data disks containing hundreds of names of Central Americans applying for amnesty or other aid were stolen. Files were broken open, including files in a nursery school located in the church itself. The only item of value taken was a typewriter. `B `1010 `CA `CA `2

11-12-87

A New York church which is a Provisional Legal Refuge and houses a peace organization and a service center for Central American refugees was broken into. The intruders rifled drawers and files but nothing appeared to have been taken. `B `950 `NY `CA `NP `2

11-5-87

Obscene and threatening messages were left on the answering machine of the Washington, D.C. office of the Central American Refugee Center (CARACEN) on four occasions between August 5, 1987 to November 5, 1987. The first threat, delivered in Spanish and accompanied by a scream of pain, was "prepare yourself!" In another message, the Spanish speaking caller signed off, "Long live Roberto D'Aubuisson. O.K., communist sons of whores, ARENA in '88." `R `470 `DC `CA `2

11-4-87

While Yanira Corea was attending a meeting at the N.Y. MADRE office, another death threat against her 3-year-old son was slipped under the office door. The threat was written in Spanish on a leaflet announcing an event featuring Yanira as a speaker. The writer also drew a stick figure with the head next to the body. (See incidents of 9-25 and 7-7-87.) `R `050 `CA `CA `2

11-87

A sanctuary church in Wayne, Pa. has been harassed by the IRS for the past three years. Although their taxes have been paid the IRS is threatening to place a lien on their bank accounts. `I `310 `PA `S `2

9-25-87

Yanira Corea, a Salvadoran active in the Los Angeles chapter of the Association of Progressive Salvadoran Women (AMPES), was followed by several men and received a telephone threat from callers who threatened the life of her 3 year old son if she

continued to denounce the death squads. Yanira had previously been kidnapped, raped, and tortured by men who identified themselves as members of Salvadoran death squads. (See incident 7-7-87.) `R `050 `CA `CA `2

9-21-87

A Guatemalan refugee living in Texas received a telephone death threat. The caller spoke in Spanish and said that he would "pay with his skin." `R `390 `TX `CA `2

9-20-87

A Salvadoran refugee who works with El Comite de Refugiados in San Jose received a death threat from a man who identified himself as an FBI agent, and spoke in very poor Spanish. The caller knew details of the refugee's life in the United State and in El Salvador, including that he had been kidnapped in El Salvador. He was warned that worse things would happen to him here. The caller also mentioned two telephone calls that the refugee had made at the Mexican border in January 1987. Early in the month, FBI agents had visited the friends of the refugee in Los Angeles, and shown them a photo which had been taken of the refugee in El Salvador before he came to the United State. `F `1000 `CA `CA `2

9-9-87

A woman who works with a project that provides humanitarian assistance to Central American refugees in San Antonio, received a telephone death threat. The caller spoke in Spanish and said, "Communist, you're going to pay for what you're doing." `R `360 `TX `CA `2

8-5-87

The office of a Central America refugee organization in Dallas received telephone warnings that the people working there were being watched. `R `140 `TX `CA `2

8-3-87

The telephone lines to the office of an Arlington, VA, Salvadoran refugee organization were deliberately cut. `V `070 `VA `CA `2

7-29-87

A Los Angeles woman active in refugee work, received a telephone call from a man with a Salvadoran accent, who said that a Salvadoran friend of hers was dead. In reality, her friend was enroute to California by plane. `TU `240 `CA `CA `2

7-17-87

A Guatemalan woman on her way to a meeting at the Guatemalan Cultural Center in Los Angeles was abducted by two Central American men who held her for several hours before they released her in a Los Angeles suburb. They questioned her about several Guatemalan and Salvadoran activists. The men said they had instructions not to hurt her this time, but if she continued to support the Salvadorans, harm would come to her. `R `130 `CA `CA

7-16-87

The office of Our Lady Queen of Angeles Church, a church active in working with Central America refugees in Los Angeles, received a telephone death threat. The caller said, "You're all going to die." `TU `230 `CA `CA `2

7-15-87

A Catholic priest active in the Los Angeles sanctuary movement received a death threat through the mail. The note was similar to threats sent by the death squads to their victims in El Salvador. It contained the following message: "E.M. (1)--Esquadron de la Muerte (1). `R `110 `CA `CA `2

7-15-87

A Salvadoran refugee who shares a house with a person whose name appeared on a Los Angeles death list (see 7/11/87 incident below) was wounded after two Central American men approached him. He pushed one of them aside and was shot as he was running away. `R `120 `CA `CA `2

7-11-87

A Salvadoran woman who was granted political asylum in the U.S. after she was kidnapped and tortured in El Salvador in 1979, received a death squad-style threat which was placed in her mailbox. The note, which was similar to several death threats which she received in El Salvador, threatened the lives of 19 other persons--17 Salvadorans and two Chicanos. The woman is active in a Salvadoran organization in Los Angeles. `R `070 `CA `CA `2

7-10-87

Unknown persons smashed the windows of a car driven by a Salvadoran woman who spoke at the press conference denouncing the kidnap and torture of an AMPES activist (see 7/7/87 incident). `R `080 `CA `CA `2

7-10-87

The home of a Salvadoran refugee who lives in Los Angeles and whose name appeared on a death list was broken into and ransacked.  
`B `820 `CA `CA `2

7-7-87

A Salvadoran refugee active in the Los Angeles chapter of the Association of Progressive Salvadoran Women (AMPES) was kidnapped outside of the Los Angeles CISPES office and then tortured and raped by three Central American men (two of them with Salvadoran accents). She was questioned about her political activities and threatened with the death of her 3-year-old son. `R `050 `CA `CA `2

6-25-87

A Salvadoran refugee office in New York City was broken into and the files ransacked. Financial records were stolen from a locked desk drawer. `B `850 `NY `CA `NP `2

1-31-87

A break-in occurred at four offices located in the basement of a sanctuary church, Calvary United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. There was no sign of forced entry. Files were rifled and papers were strewn about in the four offices. Stolen were computer disks containing mailing lists and plans for the Second Caravan of Salvadorans for Peace and Justice in Central America. No valuables were taken. The organizations housed in the church are Comite El Salvador, Comite de Refugiados Salvadoreños, Casa del Pueblo, and the Haitian Bureau. `B `640 `DC `CA `2

1-31-87

A third break-in occurred at St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in Pacifica, Ca. A window and its frame were removed, but an infra red alarm which had been installed after the second break-in went off and the intruders fled. `B `610 `CA `CA `2

1-10-87

The briefcase of a Washington, D.C. organizer for the Second Caravan of Salvadorans for Peace and Justice in Central America, who was visiting those working on the caravan in New York City, was stolen from his car trunk. The stolen materials included work plans, an address book, and access codes to the group's computer.  
`B `640 `DC `CA `2

'1-3-87

A break-in occurred at the Arlington Street Church in Boston. Five locked offices were entered. Files and desk drawers were rifled. The burglars were expert lock pickers and apparently knew which offices to enter. The only missing items were a padlock and \$5 in petty cash. The church had just voted to become a sanctuary for refugees. The vote was reported in the Boston Globe the day prior to the break-in. `B `520 `MA `S `2

11-17-86

Centro Presente, a Cambridge organization that helps refugees from El Salvador, was broken into. A computer, disks, files and keys to the file cabinets were taken. `B `390 `MA `CA `2

10-7-86

The offices of the pastor at St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in Pacifica, Ca. were broken into twice. On 10-7-86, file cabinets were left open and files thrown on the floor. The files on the floor pertained to Salvadoran political asylum cases. Money in a drawer had been strewn on top of the desk. During the second break-in, on 10-13-87, the same files were strewn about. This time the intruders took a small cassette recorder and memorabilia the pastor had on his desk. `B `610 `CA `CA `2

7-86

A church-sponsored social service agency in Washington, D.C., which provides counseling, language training, housing and employment guidance to Central American refugees, was broken into, burglarized, and vandalized eight times in a period of six weeks. Security bars were bent, a deadbolt lock taken apart and bizarre notes were left. One note read, "KGB Foxred." `B `340 `DC `S `2

7-22-86

The Arizona home of a sanctuary worker (one of three recently acquitted of alien smuggling charges), was torched by arsonists who also killed her dog with a lethal injection. Prior to the incident she had received 17 threatening phone calls and three letters. Her house has been broken into four times in the past two years. `B `330 `AZ `S `2

5-4-86

Three offices at the Wheadon United Church in Evanston, Ill. were burglarized. In one office, one file cabinet was opened and papers strewn about the floor. In another office check stubs and account records seem to have been examined. Nothing of monetary value was taken, but sometime later the sanctuary file was missing from the pastor's office. `B `570 `IL `S `2

4-2-86

Two secretaries at the United Church of Santa Fe in New Mexico discovered that the door to the church's educational area had been broken into and the wood around the deadbolt locks gouged out. Inner officers were entered and an attempt made to break open an exit door. Nothing of monetary value was taken although petty cash was available, but cabinets and closets were gone through. Although it was not officially a sanctuary church, many members are vocal advocates of sanctuary and lobbied to declare Santa Fe a sanctuary city, and New Mexico a sanctuary state. `B `110 `NM `S `2

3-7-86

The caretaker of the Trinity Methodist Church in Berkeley, found an intruder in a basement office. The intruder told the caretaker he was a volunteer working with refugees. There are no refugees in the building. By the time the police came to investigate, the intruder was gone. `B `250 `CA `S `2

3-3-86

Intruders opened two outside doors and entered the inner offices of St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Chatsworth, Ca. They broke two filing cabinets and opened desk drawers. Files were strewn about the floor. Nothing of value was taken. The break-in occurred six weeks after the founding of the San Fernando Valley Interfaith Taskforce on Central America and the pastor's involvement in Central American issues was publicized. `B `670 `CA `CA `2

2-7-86

Rev. Donovan Cook, whose church in Seattle was broken into in July 1985, received a letter from the church's insurance company threatening to cancel the insurance unless the church ceases to offer sanctuary to Central American refugees. The letter implied that the refugees were a hazard because their backgrounds and culture prevented them from properly operating electrical appliances. The church wound up having to spend \$9,000 to comply with the insurance company's safety regulations. `U `110 `WA `S `2

12-29-85

Pico Rivera Methodist Church, a sanctuary church in California, was broken into and badly damaged. A window was jimmied to gain entry and an electric saw used to make three large holes in the inside wall. The intruders found and used keys to open several doors. The door frame and wall were broken to gain access to an office where there was no key. Files were rifled, desks searched and the membership roster and church tax papers were left on a desk top. `B `240 `CA `S `2

11-20-85

A volunteer at St. Williams Catholic Church, a sanctuary church in Louisville, Kentucky, entered the church to find drawers open, stacks of slides from Nicaragua scattered, correspondence and information about sanctuary and other material in disarray. A letter from Central Americans applying for sanctuary was moved to the top of the desk.

`B `200 `KY `S `2

10-7-85

Over a one week period, FBI agents visited the homes and worksites of at least nine Salvadoran refugees in Houston. The agents, some posing as real estate brokers, were inquiring about alleged participation in "terrorist" organizations and the refugees' alleged involvement in collecting money and/or arms to send to El Salvador. Threats were made that unless the refugees cooperated in providing information they would be turned over to the INS. Two refugees were turned over to the INS and detained. Threatening phone calls have also been left on the answering machine of the refugees.

`F `190 `TX `S `2

9-16-85

A Jesuit priest in Arizona, who is also an attorney working on political asylum cases, discovered his office had been burglarized. His copying machine had been thrown to the floor and broken, a large box of scrap paper was scattered in front of the office and his file box of "cases on appeal" was missing. The incident occurred while he was on vacation and his pastor reported it to the police.

`B `170 `AZ `S `2

7-16-85

The offices of the University Baptist Church in Seattle, Washington, a sanctuary church, were broken into. Nothing of monetary value was taken, but the keys to the rooms where six Central American refugees were being housed were missing. The Rev. Donovan Cook, an unindicted co-conspirator in the Arizona case, later discovered that several personal records, including notes of telephone calls to a pastor in San Salvador, were also missing. The intruders examined files, including a file containing a list of sanctuary movement supporters and other papers relating to the sanctuary movement. Piles of airline ticket carbons were thrown about the desk top. On several occasions prior to the break-in, Rev. Cook and some of the refugees had seen a man with a walkie-talkie outside the church.

`B `150 `WA `S `2



4-4-85

A woman who coordinates sanctuary activities in Michigan, was picked up by a cab driver in Chicago who appeared to know who she was and the work she had been doing. The cab driver warned her that she was a "target" and that she and her family could be killed. He said people like her were "traitors to the state" and that the Guatemalans and Salvadorans could work with the U.S. government to assassinate people like her. Two months prior to this she had been approached by a man who warned her that death squads were forming in Detroit. `U `050 `MI `CA `2

3-24-85

A secretary at Colorado Council of Churches, Denver, was contacted by an agent of the Defense Investigative Service about the identity of people attending a prayer meeting commemorating the assassination of Archbishop Romero. `D `020 `CO `CA `2

3-24-85

A staff member of Representative Patricia Schroeder's Dallas office, was contacted by an agent of the Defense Investigative Service and asked about the identity of people who attended a prayer meeting commemorating the assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero. `D `010 `CO `CA `2

2-85

The University Lutheran Church in Berkeley, California was broken into. A typewriter and tape recorder were ignored but files were examined. `B `090 `CA `S `2

12-18-84

Five offices at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church, three of them related to Central American solidarity work, were broken into. Again, items of value were left behind. Office equipment was badly damaged in one office, and desk drawers and files were examined. On the same evening, the Church of the Covenant, in Boston, was the subject of a break-in. Seven doors were broken, file and desk drawers opened and rifled. The church had recently voted a letter of support for OCBC's sanctuary of a Salvadoran refugee, and several church members had participated in a 24-hour vigil with the refugee. The Cambridge policer submitted a report, later sent on to the City Council, noting that the intruders were "interested only in the organizational files and data" of the various offices. `B `070 `MA `S `2

'11-27-84

That same evening as a break-in to OCBC, an office at the First Congregation Church, in Cambridge, was broken into, while another office door was damaged in an unsuccessful attempt to enter. The office of the University Christian Movement in New England, a pro-sanctuary student group, was also entered. Nothing of monetary value was taken, even though a camera was in full view, but file and desk drawers had apparently been examined. `B `050 `MA `S `2

9-84

An apartment which houses three Central American refugees at the Riverside Church complex in New York City was broken into. Subsequently, the lock on the door was changed. The apartment was again broken into and a file folder on the Sanctuary Committee along with other items was taken. `B `020 `NY `S `2