



For Immediate Release
August 10, 2011

Lisa Cohen: 310-395-2544, lisa@lisacohen.org

SALVADORAN HIGH COMMANDERS RESPONSIBLE FOR JESUIT MASSACRE IN 1989 UNDER CUSTODY IN EL SALVADOR

San Francisco, California – Late Sunday night (August 7, 2011), nine former Salvadoran military officials responsible for the 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests and two women, including the former Defense Minister Rafael Humberto Larios and Air Force General Rafael Bustillo, were handed over to a Salvadoran civilian criminal court after a Spanish Court issued international arrest warrants. The former military officials, who have been indicted in Spain for crimes against humanity and state terrorism in connection with the Jesuits Massacre, had surrendered themselves to avoid being detained by the National Civil Police. The indictments were issued by the Spanish National Court in the context of the *The Jesuits Massacre Case* which was initiated in 2008 by the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA).

At approximately 10:00pm on Sunday evening, after the arrest warrants arrived in El Salvador, the defendants went to a military facility outside of San Salvador to turn themselves into military officials, undoubtedly expecting to have their case handled by the military courts. Instead, the Ministry of Defense turned the defendants over to civilian authorities who now have the defendants in custody at the former headquarters of the National Guard. Salvadoran Judge Decimo Segundo de Paz is overseeing the legal process.

In addition to Defense Minister Humberto Larios and General Rafael Bustillo, the following defendants surrendered: Colonel Francisco Helena Fuentes, Vice Defense Minister Juan Orlando Zepeda, Mariano Amaya Grimaldi, José Ricardo Espinoza Guerra, Gonzalo Guevara Cerritos and Antonio Ramiro Ávalos Vargas y Tomás Zárpate Castillo.

One of the indicted defendants, Inocente Orlando Montano, is a resident of Everett, Massachusetts. Orlando Montano was the former Vice Minister of Public Safety. CJA is hopeful that Orlando Montano will be arrested soon by U.S. authorities.

This unprecedented development in El Salvador took place in connection with the criminal lawsuit initiated by CJA and the Spanish Pro Human Rights Association (APDHE) in 2008 against 14 former military officials for the murder of the six priests, their housekeeper and her daughter. After further documentary evidence was found and presented to the Court by CJA's attorneys, six more defendants were added to the case in 2011. One of the defendants, Army Chief of Staff Emilio Ponce, died earlier this year.

CJA International Attorney Almudena Bernabeu and lead counsel on the case said: "It is our hope that those who surrendered remain in jail until their extradition or prosecution is decided. We have great confidence in the Salvadoran institutions and it is our hope that the Civil Courts will continue to work in a rigorous manner and in strict observance of the laws to achieve and deliver the justice all Salvadorans deserve."

About the Murders:

On the morning of November 16, 1989, in the midst of a bloody civil war, El Salvador and the world woke up to the news that six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and the housekeeper's daughter had been brutally murdered. A Truth Commission report released by the United Nations in 1993 revealed that the Salvadoran military planned and committed the crimes against the priests, who were outspoken critics of the military dictatorship. Nonetheless, for the past 21 years, all efforts to obtain justice in El Salvador have been thwarted. Among the victims: Fathers Ignacio Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Amando López, and Juan Ramon Moreno, who were born and ordained in Spain; and father Joaquin López y López, Elba Ramos, and her 15-year-old daughter Celina Meredith were Salvadoran. For more information on the criminal case against those responsible for the Jesuits Massacre, as well as CJA's other El Salvador cases filed in the U.S, see www.cja.org.

About CJA:

CJA is a San Francisco-based human rights organization dedicated to deterring torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA pursues litigation in the U.S. and international courts to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develop human rights law, and advance the rule of law in countries transitioning from abuses.

About APDHE:

APDHE, founded clandestinely in 1976 soon after the death of Dictator Francisco Franco, is the oldest human rights association in Spain. APDHE advocates among government agencies and civil society for the protection of human rights. APDHE has a long tradition of working for the promotion of human rights in Latin America.