

# EL SALVADOR

# Watch



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## State Violence Marks Dangerous Roll Back in Peace Accords

On Wednesday, July 5 a massive showing of police – including riot police (UMO), the GRP (an elite, specialized group of police), and snipers on the rooftop of a nearby children’s hospital – were stationed at the main entrance of El Salvador’s National University (UES) awaiting a student march demanding reduced bus fare.

When the UMO violently apprehended two 15-year-old students (at least one of whom was later taken to the hospital because of

severe beatings) the other students responded by throwing rocks at the police. Police then began firing rubber bullets and tear gas, and advancing ominously towards the students. A participant in the protest pulled out an M-16 and fired at police. Two riot police died and nine more



Salvadoran police surround the National University on July 5, 2006

were injured. The students ran into the UES for cover.

At that same time, police began firing from both the ground and from at least two artillery helicopters flying over the UES. A UES administrator was shot at from the air while inside a university office and remained hospitalized for a week because the bullet came so close to his heart. That afternoon, the government continued to militarize the surrounding streets of the UES, cordoning off entry and exit to the university

and randomly rounding up students trying to evacuate the campus. Later, the police violated the legally guaranteed autonomy of the National University by breaking the locks and occupying the campus. They remained inside for the next 4 days.

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## A New Strategy for CISPES in Confronting Increased Repression

*By Elizabeth Velasquez, Olympia CISPES*

Recent developments in El Salvador have resulted in the creation of an updated political strategy for CISPES. In our last National Convention in 2005 we decided to continue supporting the Salvadoran people in their struggle against the implementation of CAFTA and the privatization of public services; at the same time, we said we would continue countering repression in El Salvador and the militarization of the region by the U.S. government.

As part of this new strategy CISPES has promoted a campaign against the creation of the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in El Salvador. Although the funds for this institution were approved by the US Congress in June – shortly after starting our campaign – the vote did allow us to make the connections between the creation of the

ILEA, CAFTA, militarization, and other neoliberal reforms pushed forward by the US government which continue to affect the region. Therefore, the ILEA pressure helped prepare the groundwork for a longer-term struggle.

With the implementation of CAFTA this March 1 and the approval of the ILEA in El Salvador, the ARENA government strengthened its close connection with the Bush Administration. That continued support seems to have given the Salvadoran government the green light to repress protest against its economic policies. The excessive police force and the use of military planes and helicopters against student protesters on July 5 is just one example of how the government is utilizing repression to intimidate the social movement. Despite this increase in repression, different unions and

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## CISPES and the Stop CAFTA Coalition Continue Struggle for Trade Justice

On September 12, CISPES and other member organizations of the national Stop CAFTA Coalition held a press conference in Washington DC to release a monitoring report about the implementation and preliminary impacts of the US-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and to publicize the Coalition's continued work against unjust "free" trade agreements.

The monitoring report "DR-CAFTA in Year One" seeks to highlight the failures and inconsistencies of the implementation process, as well as some of the trends that have already emerged since the agreement passed in July 2005. In Central America the legal changes and effects of CAFTA are being debated and resisted by many groups, including informal market vendors, agricultural groups, labor unions, and others social movement forces.

Indeed, throughout the four years of CISPES's anti-CAFTA campaign – spanning negotiations, a lengthy ratification debate, and now implementation – there have been constant protests against the treaty across the Central America region. However, in the U.S. the importance of CAFTA and other trade agreements have been ignored by the mainstream media, aside from the few months leading up to the vote: while there is some commotion about "sending jobs overseas", there is no serious debate about the merits of current trade policy or how to hold our government accountable for entering these agreements.

After last year's battle over CAFTA, which passed in the House of Representatives by two votes, the Bush administration has continued to pursue the same model. Trade agreements with Peru and Colombia could be voted on this fall, and additional agreements with Panama and South Korea are in the pipeline. While the Democrats in Congress continue to make noise about the lack of enforceable worker rights provisions in these agreements, they have yet to articulate a deeper critique of the CAFTA model. They should be demanding a completely new approach, recognizing that the current "free" trade model is a process through which a package of rules meant to project and protect U.S. corporate interests are being constructed. In the process governments are being transformed into service providers for global capital instead of providers for their own people. With the current trade agenda failing everybody save a few corporate executives, the time has come to

demand an alternative.

Another trade model is possible. But we cannot rely on our so-called leaders to find the political will to create it on their own. We need to generate that will by building a more visible and more aggressive movement for responsible economic policies. We must demand a new approach from our government: elected officials should be required to make their positions on trade clear so that voters in the United States can make their choices accordingly.

Toward this end, the Stop CAFTA Coalition has begun a new campaign, the "No More CAFTAs – Pledge for Trade Justice." Through this campaign we demand that our public officials and other notable figures work toward a more just and equitable system of trade and integration. Congress has the constitutional authority and obligation to set the rules for international commerce, and elected officials need to exercise that responsibility by establishing clear parameters for trade agreements.

The Pledge for Trade Justice is built around core principles that reflect a vision of government as a necessary counter-weight to corporate power. Governments should retain the right to regulate corporate behavior and adjust to new realities. Investment should not be treated as an end in itself, but as a means to fortify essential services, provide for sustainable livelihoods, and maintain and replenish our environment.

**Tell your public officials - NO MORE CAFTAs!**

*For more information, to download the "DR-CAFTA in Year One" monitoring report, and to view the Pledge, go to [www.stopcafta.org](http://www.stopcafta.org)*



CISPES Director Burke Stansbury with Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)

## **Government Response: Smear, Disinformation, and more Repression**

What quickly become clear about July 5 is that ARENA had a plan in place for how to turn the events into a smear campaign against the FMLN and then use the events to justify increased repression. Within a matter of minutes of the violence, ARENA public officials were blaming the FMLN party, long before any clarification of the incident or an initial investigation of the events was possible. "It is time Salvadorans realize that if the FMLN had won, there would be armed groups circulating the streets," claimed President Saca. At a press conference held at noon that day, the government used false information to justify the use of force by police, claiming that students had AK-47s and snipers within the UES.

Late on the night of July 5, about 30 police raided the offices of the Union Confederation of Salvadoran Workers (CSTS) in an alleged "search for weapons." Union leader Daniel Ernesto Morales was beaten and detained for illegal gun possession, although the only gun they found was registered to a private security officer on the premises. The police raid and pillage of the CSTS offices came in response to a press conference held there by social movement organizations on July 5 in which they denounced the government's repressive actions that morning. Initially, police refused to provide information

about the whereabouts of Morales and the captured students. Morales was held for five days until a judge released him.

Meanwhile, the police arrested one man that they claim was giving cover to the shooter that fired the M-16, and have begun a massive manhunt for Mario Belloso Castillo, the supposed murderer of the two riot police. So far Belloso has not been captured. However, while Belloso has been identified in photos, only a thorough investigation can prove that he killed the two riot police. The Human Right's Ombudswoman Beatrice de Carrillo questioned the media's treatment of Belloso as guilty-until-proven-innocent, and said the government's only source of information – an anonymous informant that was later revealed to be an undercover cop – is insufficient.

The Human Rights office is not the only one to question the official version of July 5. Authorities of the UES challenged the PNC's claims that there were weapons found on the campus. Furthermore, when the PNC officials insisted that police helicopters did not shoot into the university – despite witnesses, pictures and video footage to the contrary that all the mainstream media refused to show – University officials released and published their photos showing police firing from helicopters.

In the midst of this clearly state-led repression of protest, an even darker shadow has

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## **Building Resistance: Salvadoran Youth in the Global Struggle Fall 2006 Tour**

Jose Oswaldo Sanchez Nataren will be touring 10 cities this November as part of CISPES' Fall Tour "Building Resistance: Salvadoran Youth in the Global Struggle." Oswaldo, an organizer for the Roque Dalton University Front (FURD) in El Salvador's National University, looks forward to making connections with groups in the United States, emphasizing that "solidarity is one of the main revolutionary principles. People together can build and transform social reality; we need to continue strengthening and building those bonds and, in that way, succeed in our fight for change." In his speaker's tour of the U.S., Oswaldo will talk about the alternatives the movement is building despite the obstacles, and the critical role young people play. Youth and youth organizing are increasingly being targeted by government repression. "The events of July 5 are now being used to justify more repression," says Oswaldo in reference to a student protest that was violently repressed by police. "Furthermore, youth in El Salvador lack opportunities; that is why we emigrate to the US by the thousands."

Born in 1979 in San Salvador, El Salvador,

Oswaldo Nataren is a visual arts student at the National University of El Salvador. He is a founding member and leader of the FURD, a political student group

on campus. The FURD has played a leading role in bringing Salvadoran students together to use art, organizing, and protest to work on issues ranging from resistance to tuition hikes to CAFTA, highlighting the connections between international policy and trade issues and the impacts those policies have on students' lives. The FURD has worked in national coalitions in El Salvador, including coordination with other student organizations; with the Popular Social Bloc, an umbrella of community, religious, women's, and labor organizations; and with the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), the opposition party in El Salvador. Oswaldo brings a message of courage to the U.S., as he and many other Salvadorans refuse to be intimidated and continue their organizing work.



# A New Era at Los Angeles CISPES

By Don White, CISPES-LA

The twenty-six year saga of the Los Angeles CISPES chapter has been a rich history encompassing every aspect of international solidarity and domestic struggle. As a founding city of CISPES in 1980, Los Angeles has been the scene of protest marches, civil disobedience actions, trainings, public forums, congressional visits, tours, delegation report-backs and scores of other reflections of our solidarity with the people of El Salvador. In the 1980's, the chapter raised huge amounts of money for material aid, and continued such efforts in later years when disasters like earthquakes struck the region. The peak of our capacity, of course, was during the war years when the chapter offices were usually packed with volunteers and staff. But our viability continued through the Peace Accords and the 1994 elections in El Salvador, and CISPES-L.A. will always have a profound history of struggling side-by-side with the Salvadoran people.

Now, CISPES-L.A. is once again on a roll! The chapter has just hired a new chapter coordinator, Salvadoran organizer Frankie Flores, a torture survivor and a veteran activist in Central America and the U.S. Frankie is bringing a new dynamic, energetic and creative spirit to our work, especially focusing on connecting with youth activists and the Latino community. There is renewed momentum and positive vibrations in the CISPES-L.A. office.

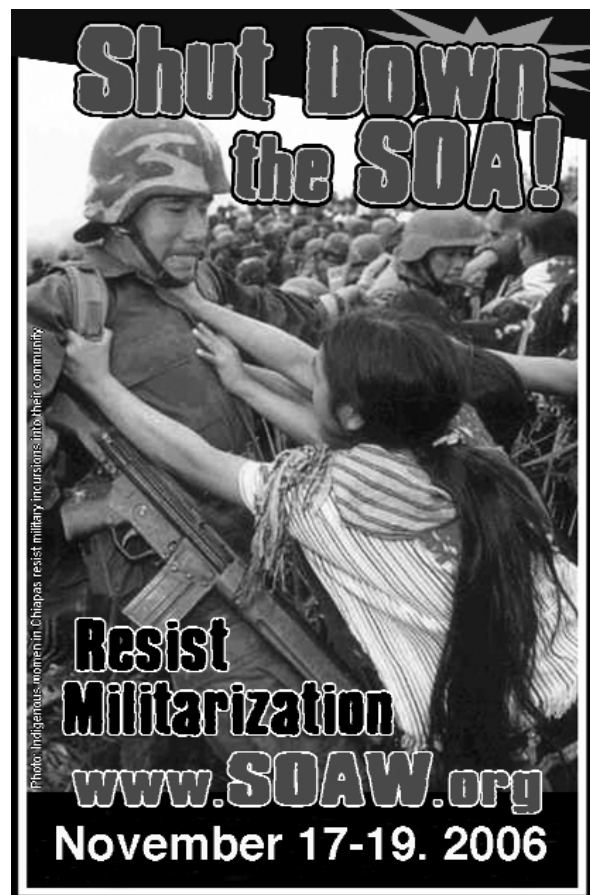
L.A. was the scene of massive immigrant rights marches this past spring, and Frankie worked closely with the CISPES chapter and many Salvadoran groups in organizing those events. He has a long history of community organizing and commitment to the struggle in El Salvador, and is involved in the "Stop the Impunity" caravan to the School of the Americas (SOA) protests in Fort Benning, Georgia this November. Frankie also writes about developments in El Salvador to a world-wide audience, helping to prepare updates and emergency alerts for solidarity activists from as far away as Australia.

In early September, CISPES National Executive Director Burke "Miguel" Stansbury visited Los Angeles and our chapter hosted a reception for Burke and Frankie. Over 30 guests arrived, including natives of El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Colombia, Venezuela, the Philippines and the U.S! During Burke's visit to our chapter an ambi-

tious fall plan was also developed, focusing on chapter development and solidarity at this critical moment in the history of Latin America. Rebuilding CISPES—and our capacity to provide solidarity to El Salvador—was at the heart of our chapter strategy.

A few of our planning goals are building an Emergency Response Network, visiting college and high school campuses, a caravan to the School of the Americas, hosting the fall tour from El Salvador, moving forward the campaign to shut down the ILEA, media and congressional work, and a focus on building chapter membership. We will also continue to play an important role in coalitions like the Emergency Coalition on Human Rights in El Salvador and various alliances in the fight for immigrant rights.

A twenty-six-year-old is still young! At 26 CISPES-L.A. is feeling younger and more vibrant every day. With the energy of a new coordinator and new chapter members, CISPES-L.A. is looking forward to a revitalized period of solidarity struggle. And everyone here agrees that it is the inspiring resistance and alternative in El Salvador that keeps us going.



**REPRESSION** *cont. from pg. 1*

begun to re-emerge from El Salvador's past – the appearance of death-squad like practices and the announcement of social “extermination” groups. In the past three months, four people well-known for their association with the political opposition have been murdered in the style of death squads.

Most ominously, ARENA has repeatedly labeled all those involved in recent protests “terrorists” and used the justification of the violence to push the so-called “anti-terrorist” law, a draconian measure passed on September 21 that criminalizes building occupations, street blockades, and other common popular protest tactics.

According to FMLN deputy Carlos Castaneda, “This is a law that only guarantees the security of the State while criminalizing the people.” The legislation sends a message to protestors – as well as death squad-like groups – that the government has little commitment to democracy or the “peace process.”

**Impunity and Intervention have not Stopped the Movement**

July 5 marked for many Salvadorans a new level of political repression which has continued in the following months. Although there was indeed a renegade within the protest that fired at police, social movement organiza-

tions, human rights groups, and student groups have all called the government's response an unjustified use of force that represents a serious setback to the 1992 Peace Accords. Without a fair, transparent investigation, it is possible that the whole truth about the shooting on July 5 will never be known. But there are, of yet, no signs that such an investigation will ever take place.

An effective investigation is especially unlikely given U.S. intervention into the case. U.S. Ambassador Douglas Barclay gave a rare interview to the press in which he repeated Saca's line of calling this a “terrorist act” and implying that the FMLN was behind the shootings. He then suggested that the U.S. could “help” in the investigation through the FBI. This incident makes clear that the U.S. should not continue its training and support of Salvadoran police, or legitimize their actions through the presence of a “police professionalizing” academy – the ILEA – which coincidentally graduated its first class at the end of June. As social movement leader, Santiago Flores said, “The government is sharpening its repressive tools as the only answer to continue with this exclusionary economic model and maintain power.” Even though the mainstream media has concealed the original causes of the protest – the economic crisis that exists in El Salvador – it will be the cause for more mobilizations.

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**CISPES STRATEGY** *cont. from pg. 1*

community groups are preparing to resist the privatization of water and a new law which would work towards privatizing health care.

For all these reasons CISPES has revised its strategy and campaign, which now focuses more on building and strengthening our capacity to demand the right to organize in El Salvador. By strengthening our Emergency Response Network we are being more proactive and building our capacity to exert pressure and denounce repression as well as the implementation of CAFTA. We are demanding that the Salvadoran government not violate the right that Salvadorans have to protest, and putting the responsibility on the US for its tacit support of repression against organizers. We will also target Congress to close the ILEA and reverse the implementation of CAFTA as well as the broader free trade model.

In our work against the ILEA we will also be pressuring the U.S. Congress to cut the funding that allows this academy to function. The budget for this institution, like the School of the Americas, is approved each year, which means we have time to educate the public about the ILEA as one more aspect

of the state of repression that Salvadoran people are facing, and to pressure Congress to cut the economic aid to the ILEA and other repressive institutions. To do this work we are going to continue our alliance building and coalition work, knowing that coordinating with others makes a stronger movement.

Finally, with the incredible mobilizations that have happened across the United States around the issue of immigration rights, CISPES has built increased solidarity with our Latin American *compañeros* and *compañeras* and continued working in coalition with organizations that are fighting for the rights of all immigrants.

With this new strategy and campaign CISPES is working for social justice and firmly denouncing the repression in El Salvador, while demanding that the Salvadoran government respect the people's right to organize. **JOIN US!**

CISPES invites you to sign-on to an **Open Letter to Salvadoran President Antonio Saca on the Escalation of Human Rights Violations in El Salvador**. Check out our website at [www.cispes.org](http://www.cispes.org) for more details!



## Building Solidarity at Summer Camp

by Cameron Herrington, Seattle CISPES

The 2006 CISPES Summer Camp, held August 9-13, brought thirty-five activists from around the United States and two from El Salvador to Washington State's pristine Blakely Island. After travels that included planes, trains, busses, carpools, ferries and water taxis, these hearty adventurers arrived having endured airport security measures that threatened to strand them for five days without any shampoo. Despite the specter of 35 heads of dirty hair – which thankfully went unrealized – this year's Summer Camp proved to be a tremendous success for the entire CISPES organization.

Organized by a heroic Summer Camp Task Force consisting of National Office staff and volunteers from the Seattle and Boston chapters, August's retreat featured numerous and invaluable workshops, discussions and strategy meetings. Two of these sessions featured talks by our guest speaker from El Salvador, Lety Mendez. Lety is an inspiring leader of the Salvadoran social movement and an advisor to the FMLN party's faction in the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly. Lety gave one presentation on the history of El Salvador's social movement and another on the FMLN's vision for the future. Other topics covered during the week included Liberation Theology, Marxist theory, Congressional lobbying, banner and poster making, and working with Latina/o communities.

Aside from providing activists with essential skills and information for continuing their work in support of the Salvadoran people's struggle for social justice, Summer Camp served as an opportunity for CISPES organizers from committees around the U.S. to share ideas and experiences, compare strategies, learn from each other's mistakes and successes, and energize and encourage new and old activists alike. This renewed enthusiasm will be essential as CISPES mobilizes to oppose water privatization and increased repression of activists in El Salvador in the coming months.

With all of the important, intellectually-taxing

work that must be accomplished at Summer Camp, having fun is generally discouraged. However, as in any revolutionary organization, CISPES seems to be a haven for those who simply refuse to conform to such expectations. This led to an appalling proliferation of recreational activities throughout the week, including hikes, midnight swims in Puget Sound, improv comedy, poetry readings, revolutionary singing and even a dance party. The Summer Camp Task Force is currently preparing a detailed proposal to crack down on such frivolous diversions at future CISPES gatherings.

But, in all seriousness, the combination of this idyllic setting, the camaraderie of the CISPES community, and the importance of the work accomplished was enough to assuage the trepidations that Lety Mendez, our Salvadoran guest, admitted to having before Summer Camp. This was Lety's first trip to the United States, and she explained that given the history of U.S. intervention in El Salvador and the current role of the Bush administration in supporting the repression and injustice perpetrated by the Salvadoran government, Lety had been wary of traveling to the U.S. However, by the end of her stay Lety said she would return as a guest of CISPES any time, having a better understanding of solidarity work and progressive activism in the U.S. Through this kind of exchange and events such as Summer Camp, CISPES will continue globalizing solidarity and supporting the heroic work that Lety and our other allies in El Salvador are doing to build a more just society.

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