

Cambridge-El Salvador Sister City Project

1151 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 876-4545

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 10, 1984

CONTACT: DAVID GROSSER 492-8719
876-4545
KATHY BROWN 492-8699

CAMBRIDGE RESPONDS TO ARRESTS AT SISTER CITY WITH TELEGRAM CAMPAIGN

Over 150 people from Cambridge and around Eastern Mass. have sent telegrams to the President of El Salvador and the U.S. Ambassador protesting the arrest of 11 people from the town of San Jose las Flores in the Northern Department of Chalatenango. The Cambridge City Council voted unanimously on March 23 to invite the residents of las Flores to join Cambridge in creating a Sister City relationship.

"We suspect that these arrests are retaliation by the Salvadoran military for the big guerrilla attack last week on the El Paraiso garrison," said David Grosser, Coordinator of the Cambridge-las Flores Sister City Project. "The tragedy is that the people of las Flores have declared their neutrality in the civil war down there."

Five hundred to one thousand soldiers entered the town on April 1, according to Grosser. After searching all the houses in town they then seized eleven residents and held them on the outskirts of town for two days. Townspeople reported the sounds of beatings and human screams. On April 3, soldiers loaded the 11 captives on helicopters and took them away.

Townspeople reported that the soldiers treated the prisoners roughly, Grosser continued, and that they saw signs that the captives had been beaten. Soldiers claimed that they found arms and uniforms during their search but the townspeople deny the charge, saying in response that the soldiers planted the incriminating material during the search. The arrests have been verified by Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, the Washington-based U.S. Commission on Human Rights and by the Salvadoran National Coordinating Committee on Repopulation, which has given aid to the townspeople of las Flores. It is believed that the prisoners are being held at the military garrison in Chalatenango City about 10 miles from the village.

The telegrams called on the Salvadoran military to release the 11 captives and for an end to harassment of the village. "We have been preparing for a human rights emergency in the village since November by collecting commitments from people to send telegrams," Grosser said, "because the Salvadoran government knows that publicity, here in the U.S. about their human rights abuses imperils the military aid they receive from us." El Salvador is

currently the third leading recipient of U.S. military aid, he added, despite the fact that the country has less than 5 million inhabitants and is only the size of Massachusetts.

The Cambridge Sister City Project has also been in contact with Sen. Kennedy's office, and plans to place an advertisement in a San Salvador daily newspaper calling for the release of the eleven captives. "Newspaper ads are a common way of expressing political opinions in El Salvador," said Project member Kathy Brown, "and human rights groups have used them in the past to pressure the government for the release of captives."

END

Boston Globe

April 9, 1977

CAMBRIDGE

Protesters send telegrams to El Salvador

Group seeking sister-city relationship with village targets government after arrests of 11

CAMBRIDGE — A group of activists trying to forge a sister-city relationship with a village in El Salvador has sent telegrams of protest to the Salvadoran government after the arrest of 11 villagers by army troops.

According to David Grosser, coordinator of the Las Flores sister-city project, 500 to 1,000 troops, arriving on foot and by helicopter, swept through the village on April 1 and carried out a house-to-house search of the village.

According to Grosser, 11 villagers were taken to an outlying area, and that night, other villagers reported, screams were heard from the area.

The 11 villagers were held for all of the next day, Grosser said. Last Friday, they were taken by helicopter to a military garrison at nearby Chalatenango City, where four were later released.

On March 23, the Cambridge City Council voted to invite the

Salvadoran village to become a sister city.

Grosser said the information on the arrests came at a press conference Monday given by the Coordinating Committee of Repopulation, a group that is critical of the government of President Jose Napoleon Duarte.

He said government troops reported they found arms and uniforms in the village, a charge that residents denied, saying that if any such items were found there,

they were planted by the soldiers.

Grosser's group has sent telegrams to US Ambassador Edwin Corr, Duarte and others in the US and Salvadoran governments, and is hoping to publish an advertisement in a Salvadoran newspaper.

"We hope that this will bear out everything we have said about the village down there and what Americans should be doing about their safety," Grosser said.

— PAUL HIRSHSON

RESOLUTION

APRIL 13, 1987

To Endorse an Emergency Delegation to Investigate ~~The Arrests in~~ the Arrests in San Jose las Flores, El Salvador

- WHEREAS The Cambridge City Council voted unanimously on March 23, 1987 to invite the people of San Jose las Flores to enter into a Sister City relationship; and
- WHEREAS On April 1, 1987, the army of the government of El Salvador occupied las Flores and arrested 11 town residents; and
- WHEREAS The whereabouts and safety of the 11 captives are still unknown; and
- WHEREAS The United States Commission on Human Rights has organized a delegation which will investigate the circumstances surrounding the arrests and obtain, if possible, the release of the captives; and
- WHEREAS A representative of the Cambridge-El Salvador Sister City Project will join the delegation; therefore be it resolved
- RESOLVED That the Council appoint this person a representative to issue a report to the City of Cambridge upon return from El Salvador; and towards this end it is
- ORDERED that the City Clerk prepare a Letter of Introduction and a copy of the Cambridge-Las Flores Sister City Resolution, both with City Seal affixed that the Representative may take to El Salvador; and that this be done no later than April 15, 1987.

Cambridge-El Salvador Sister City Project

1151 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 876-4545

Committee (in formation):

Kathy Brown

Central America Solidarity
Association

Susan Freireich

Cambridgeport Central
America Committee

David Grosser

steering cmte, Faculty/Staff
Union UMass Boston
Lizbeth Heyer

Patty Hnatluk

Thorndike St. School

Dave Slaney

President United Steel Workers
of America, local 2431

Judith Somberg

executive cmte Massachusetts
chapter National Lawyers Guild

Jack Spence

Associate Professor Political
Science UMass Boston

James Wallace

Old Cambridge Baptist Church
Sanctuary Committee

Julia Wallace

Old Cambridge Baptist Church
Sanctuary Committee

Wendell Weisinger

Central America Task Force
Boston Mobilization for Survival

Rachel Wyon

Teacher Cambridge Rindge and
Latin School

(organizations for identification
only)

April 13, 1987

Dear Councillor,

Please accept our apologies for bringing this to you at the last minute, but the situation is an emergency and time is of the essence. As you will see from the accompanying material, 11 residents of San Jose las Flores were arrested by the Salvadoran military early this month. In view of the severity that the military has treated non-combatants in the past, we fear for their safety, and feel that strong measures are necessary to obtain the kind of treatment for them that we would expect for us if we were in the same situation in our own country. The arrests have been verified by several sources including Tutel Legal, the human rights monitoring office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador.

The U.S. Commission on Human Rights has organized a delegation which will be travelling to El Salvador from April 16 to 21, and a member of our project will accompany them. Delegations of this type have been successful in the past in getting captives treated humanely and sometimes even released. We ask that you pass the accompanying resolution which will serve two purposes. The letter, which we seek from the Council, will make it easier for our member of the delegation to receive a respectful hearing in El Salvador, and the report on the trip will be educational for the many citizens of the city who have shown an interest in this Sister City project so far.

Despite the short notice, then, we hope that you can find space on your agenda to act favorably in this matter of grave concern to the people of Cambridge and San Jose las Flores.

Respectfully,

David Grosser

David Grosser
Coordinator, Sister
City Project

12.

S-266

Comm. from David Grosser, Coordinator, Cambridge-
El Salvador Sister City Project Re: recent arrest
of 11 residents of San Jose las Flores by the
Salvadoran military, early this month.

In City Council,

April 13, 1987

Placed in File