

CENTRAL AMERICA REPORT

28 February 2003

GUATEMALA

Military inmates exert control over prisons

- **Human rights groups attribute bloody uprising to former military officers**
- **Government fails to regain control over jails, sends Mack case defendants to high-security prison**

A February 12 prison uprising in the Center for Preventative Detention in Guatemala City left seven prisoners dead, four of them decapitated, and pointed to the lack of control that prison authorities exert over the country's jails. The uprising occurred two months after a rebellion in the Pavoncito prison killed 14 prisoners and highlighted the prominent role that Captain Byron Lima Oliva, convicted for the murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi, had carved out in the prison. After the uprising, Lima resisted his own transfer, placed conditions on the prison authorities and achieved the transfer of 200 prisoners who he said were responsible for attacking his band of supporters.

Spontaneous Uprising or Military Plot? According to human rights groups, the uprising had signs of a plot. Organizations such as the Archbishop's Human Rights Office (ODHA) and the Myrna Mack Foundation have suggested that the six military prisoners in the Preventative Detention Center accused or convicted in the killings of Gerardi and the anthropologist Myrna Mack may have sparked the mutiny hoping to create confusion that would result in their transfer to a military prison.

In the hours following the uprising, the defense lawyers of the military prisoners repeatedly called for their transfer and, amid the chaos, there was a failed intent by the penitentiary officials to transfer the Mack defendants General Edgar Godoy and Colonels Juan Valencia Osorio and Guillermo Oliva to military headquarters. They were barred from entering because there was no legal order for their transfer. They later were moved to the civilian high-security prison El Boquerón.

Nery Rodenas, director of the ODHA, told Central America Report that throughout January his office had received rumors that "The military men imprisoned in the Preventative [Detention Center] were preparing an uprising to provoke their transfer to a military prison."

Paid advertisements run in December by the Guatemalan Association of Military Veterans (AVEMILGUA) pointed to the December uprising in the Pavoncito

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prison as an argument for moving the military prisoners. AVEMILGUA was founded in September 1995 as an association of high-ranking military officers linked to the counterinsurgency campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s.

Just days before the uprising, Lima's father, Colonel Byron Lima Estrada, had been moved to the military hospital complaining of gastro-intestinal pains. And during the disturbances, military officials in the Presidential Chief of Staff's Office (Estado Mayor Presidencial, EMP) arrived at the jail to ask after their former colleagues.

The uprising occurred on the eve of important rulings in both the Gerardi and Mack cases. As the disturbances were taking place, the Supreme Court overturned a ruling from the Fourth Court of Appeals, which had annulled the conviction of those convicted in the Gerardi case the to Limas, Obdulio Villanueva, who was decapitated during the uprising, and the priest Mario Orantes.

The Interamerican Human Rights Court began hearing a case against the government of Guatemala on February 18 charging responsibility for the assassination of Myrna Mack.

Power Games. Adolfo Reyes Calderón, Minister of the Interior, provided a different version of the events, blaming the former mayor of Cuilapa, Santa Rosa, Edwin Antonio Franco, for attacking prisoners in sector 7. Franco had been charged with embezzlement and three attempted murders while mayor, and now is accused of having armed the prisoners who initiated the riot.

In the days after the disturbances, ODHA and the Consultative Commission for the Reform of the Penitentiary System announced that they had received complaints that Captain Lima Oliva had 'militarized the prison' with the support of loyal prisoners and prison personnel.

According to testimony from prisoners, Lima Oliva collected monthly payments from each of the 1500 prisoners for security, cable television, food, water, light, cigarettes and preferential placement.

Irma Arriaza, director of the country's prison system, said that internal power struggles had provoked the clashes. Meanwhile, human rights groups were accusing the state of ceding control of the prisons to groups of organized prisoners.

According to Helen Mack, director of the Myrna Mack Foundation, "Arriaza lacks power, since her deputies are former military officials and they don't obey her."

According to Mack, Arriaza had ordered the military prisoners transferred to the high-security El Boquerón prison, "But the director of security changed the order so that they were taken to military headquarters," (Siglo Veintiuno 15/2/03).

Captain Lima Oliva emphasized his own power in

the hours after the uprising, rebuffing any attempt to transfer him and telling the press that "a captain does not abandon his ship."

Days later, he announced in a radio interview that the 1200 prisoners allied with him would begin daily executions of gang members if they [the gang members] were not removed from the prison.

AVEMILGUA defends itself. In an interview with Central America Report, Moreira rejected the idea that former military officials had sparked the uprising. "The reports are false. They don't make sense."

The military prisoners, he said, "Hadn't asked us for anything. The association acted on its own. The Army stopped fighting the war, but its enemies haven't. A psychological war has been generated that has provoked a high degree of animosity against the military. Common criminals respond to their instincts and are subject to the subliminal pressures of the radio, press and television and what is said against the military. There is antipathy to the military, and in a prison of thousands of inmates, they are an insignificant group."


Responding to the apparent control of Captain Lima Oliva, Moreira said: "He is just as sentenced as any other military man in prison. What happened to Villanueva could have happened to the rest of them. The captain has done work that benefits the prisoners and obtained funding from the church to fix up the bathrooms, education programs and sports. He did it to have something to entertain himself, because in a prison there aren't any programmed activities."

Absence of the State. According to Rodenas, the absence of the state in controlling prisons has provoked high levels of corruption, anarchy and abuse.

He said that human rights activists think it is possible that the uprising was planned by the military officials involved in the emblematic Mack and Gerardi cases as a strategy for portraying themselves as being in danger and promoting their request to be housed in a military prison.

Luis Ramírez, director of the Institute for Comparative Studies of Penal Sciences, told Central America Report that the legal system has stayed outside of the prison walls, largely because the government has not passed laws to govern the penitentiaries.

"In the case of an uprising there is no possibility of punishing the prisoners. There is no stability in the prison system or means to control the groups that exert power within the prisons," he said.

"For a time, prisons were controlled by groups linked to organized crime. Now it's the military's turn," he added 

COSTA RICA

New law opens door to privatization

- **Concerns that New Law will Allow Privatization of 45% of Energy**
- **Deputies say Ex-government Officials to Benefit from the Law**

The recent approval of the Law of Participation of Rural Energy Cooperatives and Private Companies in Municipal Public Services (CONELECTRICAS) has revived debate regarding the future of Costa Rica's energy production, which has until now been in government hands. Many groups are skeptical of the new law, seeing it as a move toward privatization of energy within the framework of trade negotiations with the US. According to opponents of the law, ex government officials stand to benefit the most.

New law, old intentions. At the end of January, the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly approved the project of the Law of Participation of Rural Energy Cooperatives and Private Companies in Municipal Public Services (CONELECTRICAS), which authorizes energy cooperatives to generate, distribute, and commercialize electricity. The authorization was granted one week after US trade negotiator Regina Vargo suggested Costa Rica open its state monopoly of telecommunications and electricity to private investment as part of Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) negotiations.

Before the project could be passed by Congress, organizations like the Costa Rican Conservation Federation (FECON), the National Association of Public and Private Employees (ANEP), the National Campesino Coordination and the National Indigenous Coordination demanded a national forum to define the country's energy model and the legal framework for hydroelectric concessions. In their joint declaration, the groups called the law part of the "continual attempts to privatize the profitable business of electricity production and distribution."

Mauricio Alvarez of FECON told *Central America Report*, "The approval of the CONELECTRICAS project is irresponsible. It will encourage an activity that has caused many negative environmental, social, and economic impacts and which continues to delay the discussion of what

our energy model ought to be."


For Alvarez, the law allows the development of hydroelectric plans with capacities of up to 60 megawatts (Mw), thus avoiding the need for special legislation to authorize such plants. The new law thus expands the powers conferred by the controversial Law 7200, which fixed the limit at 20 Mw. At the same time, CONALECTRICAS raised the cap on production of such entities. Under Law 7200, cooperatives and private firms could generate only 15% of national energy production; the new law allows them to generate up to 30%.

"Basically, what they're trying to do with the CONELECTRICAS is what was attempted in 2000, the final step in the process of privatization of public power services granted by the Costa Rican Energy Institute (ICE), begun with the Law 7200; now CONALECTRICAS stands to allow the privatization of 45% of national electricity production," explained Alvarez.

Political links. For critics of the legislation, one of its most serious impacts lies in Article 2, which authorizes the production, distribution, and commercialization of electric energy by municipal public services firms. Such wording is vague enough, they claim, to allow for any kind of private initiative.

Osvaldo Durán, sociologist and director of the organization Alternative Projects for Sustainable Development (PROAL), said, "It's not about opposition to the cooperative model, but rather to deficiencies in the law which open doors that threaten to displace or simply take advantage of the cooperatives for the benefit of transnationals and the national political-business sector."

Rodrigo Alberto Carazo, deputy of the Civil Action Party (PAC) and former Citizens Defender, criticized the law as well. According to Carazo, one of the cooperatives, Coopeguanacaste R.L., sought tax breaks for the Chorotega wind power project on behalf of the ICE. In reality, however, the cooperative serves as a front for a company called the Wind Powered Electricity Chorotega, SA. "Thirty-five percent of the company's stock belong to Coopeguanacaste, a similar percentage belongs to the firm Turbo Winds of Central America, and the other 30% belongs to other entities: Cuspide Investment Corporation and Mandarin Investments of the West," said Carazo.

According to Carazo's investigations, these two entities are located on the Cerro Cacao lands, intended site of the project. The lands' majority stockholder is Rodolfo Brenes Gómez, president of the state-owned National Bank of Costa Rica (BNCR). Brenes, said Carazo, was a deputy of the Christian Social Unity Party (PUSC), direct personal advisor to former president Miguel Angel Rodríguez Echeverría. "Furthermore, the main proponent of this wind power project is Dr. Carlos Vargas Pagán, partner in the firm directed by the ex-president Rafael Angel Calderón Fournier," averred Carazo 

GUATEMALA

New wave of violence targets youth in Guatemala City

- **NGO's count an increase in the number of youths murdered in the capital**
- **Outreach workers, and rehabilitated gang members appear to be targeted**
- **Human Rights Organization to present a case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights**

NGO's have report a high number of young people killed by firearms in Guatemala, particularly in the capital. Organizations working closely with urban youth and street gangs are alarmed by what they see as a clear rise in violence against street children, and young people in urban areas. Particularly troubling is the apparent targeting of rehabilitated gang members and leaders within projects that work to help gang members reenter society. The high incidence of deaths among minors has caused some analysts to suspect a program of social cleansing in the capital city, and at least one legal organization plans to present a denouncement against the government of Guatemala the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Violence on the Rise. The high numbers of young people murdered with firearms in Guatemala City have caused alarm amongst various groups that work with urban youth and street gangs. According to Casa Alianza, an NGO that works with street children in Latin America, the official morgue reported that 42 children and youths younger than 23 years old were killed with guns in the month of December alone.

Another study conducted by H.I.J.O.S., a group of young people who lost their parents during the civil conflict, showed that the same morgue reported a total of 82 people murdered in the capital during the first three weeks of January of this year. Of these, 58 were youths killed by guns.

Casa Alianza and the Office of the Attorney of Human Rights in Guatemala have begun a project intended to keep track of the number of people under the age of 23 killed in the country. They estimate that the number is in excess of 100 per month.

However, even this number may be low. One study done by the Institute of Comparative Sciences and Penal Studies (INECEP) shows that almost 40 young people are murdered each month in Villa Nueva, a poor community on the outskirts of Guatemala City.

Many of the victims are believed to be street children or members of the gangs in Guatemala City.

"Approximately 40% of the young people killed by firearms exhibit gunpowder burns, the majority of them on the cranium," the director of the city morgue, Mario Guerra, told *Central America Report*. "Such burns signify

that the victim was shot at less than arms length, making it look like an execution," he said.

There are also reports that some of the bodies show signs of torture, "It's true we are seeing signs of torture on some of the bodies. Our analysis is: Where is a person's dignity located? In the face and in the genitals. If you want to break someone, these are the areas to focus damage upon," said Abner Pareras of the Center for Legal Action in Human Rights (CALDH).

Outreach workers under fire. The Alliance for the Prevention of Crime (APREDE) is an umbrella organization that works with current and former gang members, helping them reenter society. Since November of 2002, 13 employees and volunteers have been murdered.

"In November Raul Manchame became the new director of the PNC. Since that time 13 of our workers have been shot. We cannot say for certain that the change in directors has anything to do with it, but it corresponds exactly with the beginning of the violence focused on APREDE," said Abner Pareras. CALDH is a member organization of Aprede.

The latest killing was on February 15, when Edgar Gomez, an employee of Aprede and ex-gang member, and another man working with the organization were shot to death in the outlying community of San Miguel Petapa on the outskirts of Guatemala City.

The murder came just 18 days after two other volunteers in the organization were gunned down in broad daylight in the central park of Villa Nueva.

"In both cases, the perpetrators were described as well dressed, carrying modern automatic weapons, and driving late model cars. In both cases the assassins quickly got out of the cars, fired their weapons and escaped, the whole process taking less than a minute," said Pareras.

Neither of the cases have been resolved, and actions of the PNC in both cases are criticized by APREDE. Human Rights organizations contend that whoever is the perpetrator of these crimes is acting with impunity.

"In Villa Nueva, when the killing took place in January, there were six policeman in the park," explained Dr. Alejandro Rodriguez, of INECEP. "What is more, there is a police station directly in front of the park. The car carrying the gunmen pulled up, the gunmen quickly got out, fired their weapons and fled in the car. The policemen did nothing. Instead of pursuing the car, the police arrested some of the gang members that were there to meet with us," he said.

Similarly, on February 15, just two or three hours after Edgar Gomez was killed, the police arrested Juan 'Juanito' Ixcol, a leader of the Salvatrucha gang.

"At 12:30 p.m. they were killed in Petapa, and at two or three o'clock, they arrested Juanito. They held him over the weekend, and it was not until Monday afternoon that he appeared before a judge. He showed signs of having been interrogated roughly, he had obviously been hit repeatedly," said Rodriguez.

Who is responsible? Gangs are often fingered by the National Police as the major sources of violence in Guatemala, people who work with them regularly say that these recent events do not fit the profile of gang violence.

"Edgar Gomez was shot right between the eyes," commented Abner Pareras. "The accuracy and efficiency with which the operation was conducted shows that these people are well trained in what they are doing, these are not amateurs."

"The gangs don't have modern weapons or cars like the ones they used [in the killings of APREDE workers]. They don't make that much money, and they are not well trained in the use of guns," said Eber Hernandez, an ex-member of the Salvatrucha gang who now works with I'qui'Balam, a community development group based in Villa Nueva that is largely composed of former and current gang members, and works in the rehabilitation of youth involved with gangs.

There are varying theories about who is behind the recent spate of violence. "It could be organized crime involved with the drug trade. The gangs distribute drugs within the city, as well as consume them, and the organized crime elements don't like it

when gang members rehabilitate themselves and reenter general society," Hernandez said.

Other theories involve the PNC, and possible programs of 'social cleansing' intended to present the image of an administration cleaning up the streets in an election year. Guatemala was recently criticized by the U.S. Government for corruption within the administration, and some think the increase in deaths of street children and gang members in the capital could be a by-product.

"It could be a form of social cleansing," said Hector Dionisio of Casa Alianza, "The number of deaths is too many not to arouse suspicion."

Still others think that there are parallel groups, or clandestine groups within the security forces themselves that are irresponsible.

"We have been told that there are elements within the National Police that are involved with the distribution of drugs. The business is reportedly worth Q50,000 (US\$ 6500) a week. They have vested interest in maintaining control over these kids," said Rodriguez.

The idea of the PNC being involved with drug distribution is not implausible considering its record of corruption, and theft of drugs from holding facilities (see *CAR* Vol. XXX No. 6)


Whether or not security forces are involved, not one of the murders has been resolved, and the perpetrators appear to be able to act with complete impunity, killing people in public places and in broad daylight with little consequence.

The recent killings of young people, the appearance of bodies showing signs of torture, as well as the constant threatening and sometimes murder of judges throughout the country are tactics with long histories in Guatemala, where death squads operated throughout the country during the civil conflict. (see *CAR* Vol. XXX No. 2)

For some analysts the lack of investigation on the part of the PNC is cause for suspicion, and a crime in and of itself.

"The PNC chooses to focus on small crimes, such as possession of small amounts of drugs, or consuming drugs. The rate of murder investigation resolution in some areas, such as Amatitlan, is as low as 0%," said Dr. Rodriguez.

"When there is not concrete response from the police, we are left to assume that it is social cleansing, that whoever is doing it has impunity," said Dionisio.

In response to the lack of a concrete response from the government and PNC, CALDH has announced that it will present denouncements against the state in the cases of the 19 murdered workers in rehabilitation programs, and for "the lack of Governmental will to investigate clandestine groups operating within the country," (*Prensa Libre* Feb. 25, 2003) 

GUATEMALA

Myrna Mack trial begins

- **Guatemalan government asks for suspension of proceedings**
- **Guatemalan justice system at issue**

On February 18, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) began oral arguments in a trial in which the Guatemalan government is accused of responsibility for the 1990 assassination of anthropologist Myrna Mack. Mack's family is hoping for a judgement against the Guatemalan state for promoting the committing of the crimes and allowing those responsible to escape justice. The plaintiffs will present evidence on the deficiencies of the Guatemalan justice system as well as the cover-ups and impunity that prevented clarification of the crime. Just as the trial was beginning, the Guatemalan government provided the court with a statement recognizing state responsibility for the denial of justice in the case and asked that testimony be suspended in order to pass directly to the negotiation of reparations. After the petition was denied, the government withdrew from the proceedings and announced that it would only return to state its final position.

First Testimony. In the first session, members of the IACHR listened to testimony from Lucrecia Hernández Mack, Myrna Mack's daughter, Julio Cabrera, Bishop of Jalapa, Helen Mack, and Virgilio Rodríguez, a witness who is now living in exile in Canada.

Judges heard descriptions of how Myrna Mack had worked with refugees displaced in Guatemala's 36 year civil war, how she was watched by agents of the Presidential Chief of Staff's Office (Estado Mayor Presidencial, EMP), and the effect her killing had on her family.

Helen Mack noted that in a trial in Guatemala last year, it was proved that the EMP killed her sister and then labeled the case a 'state secret' to cover up the crime and obstruct justice. The Ministry of Defense repeatedly denied access to information related to the case to both judges and prosecutors, said Mack.

Mack asked the court to name an observer of the penal process that continues in Guatemala against the alleged intellectual authors of the crime. On February 26, an appeals process began in which an EMP official convicted of intellectual authorship of the crime will appeal his conviction and the prosecutors will appeal the acquit-

tal of his two codefendants.

In the second hearing, Ricardo Alvarado, a lawyer representing the Guatemalan government, announced that the state would withdraw from further proceedings. In a press release, the Myrna Mack Foundation said that the withdrawal was unprecedented in the hemisphere, except for the case of Alberto Fujimori, the former Peruvian president and dictator, who also refused to appear before the court during his regime.

Mack said the government's position was confusing, since the withdrawal came one day after Foreign Minister Edgar Gutiérrez had recognized the responsibility of the state in the denial of justice.

"The State does not want to hear the truth about this killing, and it continues protecting the state structures that observed criminal behavior," said Mack.

On February 19, the court heard testimony from former police and judicial officials describing the first investigations that led them to conclude that Myrna Mack's killing had been political. They detailed intimidation and threats received from judicial and intelligence officials that had culminated in the killing of police investigator José Mérida and the exile of witnesses.


In 1993, Noel Beteta, a former EMP member, was convicted of the actual slaying. In 2002, Colonel Juan Valencia Osorio was found guilty by a Guatemalan court, which absolved his EMP colleagues Colonel Juan Oliva and General Edgar Godoy. All three of those tried in 2002 remain in prison pending appeals.

In an interview with *Central America Report*, Helen Mack said, "I was always convinced of the necessity of believing in the rule of law." She went on to say that the trial in Costa Rica would focus on the Guatemalan justice system and the complicity of the state in the murder.

Official Position. On February 18, the Guatemalan government filed a motion to suspend the beginning of oral arguments, arguing that the state had already recognized institutional responsibility for the crime.

In an interview with *Central America Report*, Foreign Minister Edgar Gutiérrez said that the state had told the court that "The state reiterates its acceptance of responsibility for not protecting Myrna's life, for not investigating, and not prosecuting those responsible."

José Luis Borrayo, a consultant in international penal law, told *Central America Report* that this recognition could be a positive signal for the international community, since it indicates that the country is looking to find a path leading to respect for human rights.

However, he said that the state could not intervene directly in the ongoing trials by accepting institutional responsibility or acknowledging that state elements participated in the crime. "That will have to be settled in the Guatemalan courts. What the Court is doing is to open a space in order to provide an opening in Guatemala" 

HONDURAS

Proposal to Change Property Tax Registry

- **Unregistered property valued at an estimated at US\$12,899 million**
- **Efforts initiated to jump start real estate market**

Over eight thousand Honduran properties are not registered, representing US\$12,899 million in lost property taxes, or “dead capital.” In an effort to address the problem, advisers have proposed a series of reforms in the land registration system that would improve organization, strengthen the real estate market, cut costs of land transactions, democratize access to land, and reduce corruption.

No Man’s Land. The existence of eight thousand “extralegal” properties was confirmed by a recent study by the Liberty and Democracy Institute (ILD), directed by Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, and the Honduran Council of Private Business (COHEP). The study, carried out in July and August 2001, collected information to identify and estimate the values of extralegal business and property assets, also known as “dead capital.”

The study’s results were corroborated by the Administration of Rural Areas Project (PAAR), financed by the World Bank and overseen by the Honduran government’s Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock.

According to the study, 86% of Honduras’ 6.5 million inhabitants live on extralegal lands, characterized as such because they lack titles and do not appear in rural or municipal land registries. The study estimates that of the US\$12,899 million in land assets, a total of US\$8,000 are located in urban areas, particularly in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, the business and industrial hub of the northern coast, and in the island of Roatán off the Atlantic Coast. Extralegal tenancies include: the occupation of communal (*ejido*) or national lands, which belong to the States and the municipalities; occupation of private lands without authorization; and the occupation of lands whose status as private or public is unknown.

Further more, the study identified housing built by the state and by guilds, associations and cooperatives without property titles or which carried limitations or prohibitions regarding transference or encumbrance.

Speaking to *Central American Report*, Henry Merriam, urban architect and director of PAAR, attributed the phenomenon to the lack of a bureaucratic and institutional structure capable of dealing with the growing demand for housing by the country’s poor majority. He also pointed to complications arising from insecure property rights, multiple land titles for the same property, state-initiated land recuperation processes, and colonial land titles. Further problems are linked to lack of buyable urban land and available rural land, both of which give rise to extralegal occupation as the only option for the poor.

Merriam went on to say that the state’s response to the land problem—agrarian reform, incomplete titling processes, and ineffective housing programs—only aggravated the problem of illegal ownership. Complex legislation and a bureaucratic structure incapable of assigning, recognizing, and protecting property rights further contribute to the crisis. Merriam emphasized that only 800 thousand properties are inscribed in the land registries.


Juan Ferrera, ex-president of COHEP, told *CAR* that lack of agrarian reform in recent decades has led to “an agrarian disaster. But the times has come to define new and modern rules for utilizing this passive wealth.” Both Ferrera and Merriam signaled the lack of a unified system of land registration and property tax for both rural and urban areas as a chief cause of dead capital.

Proposed Modernization. Merriam stressed that the economic development of Honduras necessitated the establishment of a new institution to systematize existing information and update municipal, departmental, and national land registries.

“What we are proposing is a transformation in the land system, similar to what other countries have done, to modernize processes for titles, registration, and taxation of lands in order to regulate or eliminate extralegal tenancy,” said Merriam.

Merriam added that such a system would use geographic, geometric, and legal information to separate registered municipalities, with and without problems, and from there establish a “Real Folio” or single registration for each property. This would improve the real estate market and make remote transactions, including buying and selling of properties and the establishment of mortgages, much more efficient.

Currently, to obtain proof that a piece of land or house is free of encumbrance can take between 15 and 30 days. Then, banks or lending institutions carry out an evaluation and topographical study to verify the measurements.

Merriam asserted that “The National Institute or Center for Property Tax and Registration proposed will have an information system accessible to everyone, even by Internet, to facilitate all kinds of processes, which will doubtless eliminate the steps and paperwork that give rise to corruption” 

Sexual Health programs report a lack of resources

- **Rural poverty increases the incidence of adolescent pregnancies**
- **Government bodies in charge of children and adolescents have little funds.**

The unfolding of the case of a pregnant nine year old girl, and renewed doubts and brought up old questions concerning state programs to attend to adolescent maternity. The state policies included in the National Program of Development includes actions on the part of educational and health institutions, but according to specialists, not only to these institutions lack a coordinating body to supervise the carrying out of these tasks, but have not received the necessary budget from the present administrations.

Alarming situation of single mothers. The case of a nine year old girl who was raped, and is now pregnant as a result has refocused attention on adolescent maternity in Costa Rica. The topic is an important one as approximately one in every five children born in Costa Rica, is born to a mother younger than 19 years old.

In the National Report on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health in Costa Rica, investigator Dina Krauskopf states that, "Low educational and socio-economic levels, in conjunction with living in a rural area, are the strongest indicators of the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy."

With the goal of coordinating private and government sexual and reproductive health programs, Costa Rica passed the General Law to Protect Adolescent Mothers. However, many of the institutions working in the field still lack focus, as well as the necessary funds to implement their programs.

According to Ana Carcedo, of the Feminist Center for Information and Action (CEFEMINA), "The institutions do not address the subject in the way that they should. What is more making responsible decisions about your sexuality is a way of taking ownership of your own body. If there are no programs that educate

young women about sexual health, it is going to be difficult to diminish the frequency of adolescent pregnancy," she claimed.

Relocating funds. As part of the preventative efforts included in the National Plan for Development, the policies of the Attention to Disease program contains services for pregnant adolescent girls, and establishes goals to increase the number of pregnant adolescents treated from 15,000 in 2001 to 75,000 in 2006. The goals were set in anticipation of a projected increase in the number of adolescent mothers, thought to be perhaps 400% over the same four year period.

The state run Institute for Social Aid (IMAS) execution plan has an established goal of attending to only 4000 adolescents per year through its Constructing Opportunities program.

As a result the Program for the Professional Development of Women, part of the government run National Institute for Learning (INA), plans to reduce the number of young women trained each year, in order to help focus resources on pregnant adolescents.

Lorena Camacho, of the National Women's Institute (INAMU) sustained that, "The current adolescent, and child pregnancy rates make it necessary to center the attention of reproductive health programs on this group, and emphasize the importance of responsible parenthood."

"To contribute to this process, it will also be necessary to create mental and occupational health legislation with the intention of attending to the development of young girls and adolescents," claimed Julieta Rodriguez, the director of Program for Integral Attention to Adolescents (PAIA).

Limited Funds. While many specialists maintain that solving the problem of unwanted pregnancies will require the work of Cultural, social and economic resources, at the same time the institution in charge of the topic-The National Patronage of Children-is severely lacking funds.

Within the framework of the PND, diverse programmatic goals have been assigned to PANI for the years 2002-2006.

However, only two of these proposed programs have a defined budget, and in both cases they are searching for funding apart from the 7% of the Rent Tax, the source fixed by law to provide for the PANI budgetary needs.

The last presidential administration did not grant all of the resources promised help defer the cost of such programs, and the current administration now says that PANI will not receive the full funding that it is guaranteed by law until the year 2006 