



FUNDACIÓN “SÍ A LA VIDA”
Telefax (503) 2243 0808 sialavida@turbonet.com

February 20, 2007

AN OPEN LETTER FROM EL SALVADOR TO THE MEDIA AND MEDIA-MONITORING GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

RE: REQUEST FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF NEW YORK TIMES AND INVOLVED PARTIES IN THE TIMES' ATTACK ON EL SALVADOR'S VALUES, LAWS AND SOVEREIGNTY

Greetings from El Salvador!

As the president of the Yes to Life Foundation (Sí a la Vida) of El Salvador, I write to update you on the continuing controversy re: The New York Times Magazine publication of Jack Hitt's "Pro-Life Nation" (New York Times Magazine, April 9, 2006).

As was pointed out so well by numbers of news accounts and blogs following the Times Public Editor's column by Byron Calame on Dec 31, the Times publication of the "Pro-Life Nation" article and handling of subsequent revelations and complaints was extremely irresponsible and biased.

We in El Salvador feel this article very much maligned our country. It was a clear attack on our values, our laws and our sovereignty.

It was not just the one incident brought out so well by Mr. Calame, and that the Salvadoran court documents clearly showed: Carmen Climaco was sentenced to a 30-year term NOT for having had an abortion at 18 weeks, as reported in the Times Magazine story, but for aggravated homicide for strangling to death her new-born daughter after a full-term pregnancy and delivery. Nor was it just the other Times editors' refusal to appropriately and promptly correct the story, again as so well-documented by Mr. Calame.

What we are now seeing in El Salvador, thanks to the recent investigative work of one of our major newspapers, El Diario de Hoy, is that there are a whole series of additional problems with the "Pro-Life Nation" piece, some of which we list below. These revelations have led us to call for media-monitoring organizations and Salvadoran authorities to determine any possible unethical, unprofessional and/or illegal activity by the New York Times, its reporter and others involved in the Times Magazine cover story.

If you consider the following information important, I hope you will get the message out as widely as possible. (Unfortunately, The New York Times has not accepted an Op-Ed piece we submitted covering many of these points, thereby depriving its readers of this important information, and preventing concerned Salvadorans from expressing our opinion on something we believe very much maligned our country.)

Here are some of the points brought out by El Diario de Hoy:

1) Alleged fabrications and misquotes attributed to reporter Jack Hitt. A story published in El Diario de Hoy on January 21, 2007 cited public prosecutors who assert Hitt inaccurately quoted them, and that he allegedly fabricated details to suit his purposes. Some of the alleged misquotes have to do with statements on legal issues. In the case of the alleged fabrication, when Hitt reported on an interview he had with a female prosecutor, he actually reported her physical description different than at the time of the interview with him. The prosecutor, Flor Evelyn López, explained that sometime after the interview with Hitt, she received a call from a woman she believed was translating for Hitt who asked her if she owned a silver cross on a chain. When she said she did own such an item, the caller asked her to describe it, which she did. That description ended up in the Hitt article, as if she were wearing it at the time of the interview. The description of her hair style and make-up was also changed. The end result is that her description was altered, giving her what many would consider a more conservative, religious and less attractive appearance.

2) Questionable relationship of Hitt with individuals linked to a pro-abortion organization which later used his article published by the Times to try to raise money for its own purposes.

- Hitt used a translator who had previously collaborated with Ipas, a U.S. NGO involved in abortion advocacy world-wide and active in El Salvador. This was inappropriate and gives an impression of bias.

- Ipas used the Hitt article as part of an Internet effort to raise funds. The Ipas website requesting funds to appeal Climaco's case had a link to The New York Times URL for the Hitt article. Yet, according to El Diario de Hoy, Climaco has not received help from anyone but her mother, and in addition, contrary to what the New York Times Editor's Note of January 7 says, the Salvadoran press reports that Climaco is NOT planning to further appeal her conviction.

- Judge Sanabria, a major source for background information, and interviewed by Hitt for the article, had previously been publicly recognized for her assistance to Ipas in the publication of an abortion and the law document. Hitt's piece did not mention this relationship. I believe that a number of statements made by Judge Sanabria in the Hitt article are inaccurate and possibly unethical and unprofessional, but when El Diario de Hoy requested an interview to discuss these issues, she refused. Salvadorans are concerned that a Salvadoran judge consented to an interview by a foreign newspaper, and yet refuses to respond to requests for an interview by a major newspaper in her own country.

To us, it only indicates there is more here that needs to be investigated. What is the relationship of Ipas, Hitt and Sanabria? What was the genesis for the article? Why were important facts dealing with our abortion laws so distorted in the Times story where Hitt says women are persecuted? For example, the Salvadoran reporters who investigated the issue of criminal prosecutions for abortion said that in the past seven years they found only three women were convicted of abortion and none of them were imprisoned. The

primary purpose of criminal prosecutions is to charge abortionists who take advantage of women who find themselves in difficult situations.

Another aspect of abortion in El Salvador which could have been a part of the original Times story are government figures which show maternal mortality went down in years following the tightening up of our abortion law. Women are safer because of our laws.

What interest does The New York Times have in seeming to promote the abortion of our children, and in portraying groups like Ipas as the experts on abortion in El Salvador?

We call on responsible media-monitoring organizations and relevant Salvadoran authorities to initiate investigations to determine any possible unethical, unprofessional and/or illegal activity by the New York Times, its reporter and others involved in the Times' "Pro-Life Nation" story.

We have plenty of problems in our country. Fortunately, one problem we don't have in El Salvador is a legal system that allows and even facilitates a mother killing her own child. We hope El Salvador will be left alone, so we can solve our own problems without outside interference, and find positive, life-enhancing solutions, not the death-dealing some want to impose from outside.

Any attention you can bring to this matter may correct some of the damage already done and prevent future abuse.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Julia Regina Sol de Cardenal
President
Yes to Life Foundation (Sí a la Vida)
San Salvador, El Salvador, CENTRAL AMERICA
Phone number in El Salvador: 503- 7118-3326

Some relevant links:

Original NYT "Pro-Life Nation" (with Jan 7, 2007 Editor's Note):

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/09/magazine/09abortion.html?ex=1302235200&en=d855d80018cd6c56&ei=5088&partner=rssuserland>

Lifesite: NYT caught in Abortion-Promoting Whopper - Infanticide Portrayed as Abortion <http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2006/nov/06112806.html>

Carmen Climaco Court case – El Salvador
<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2006/nov/061128a.html>

Calame article Dec 31
http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/31/opinion/31pubed.html?_r=2&oref=login&oref=slogin

* Investigative articles from El Salvador's « *El Diario de Hoy* » *
Jan. 4, 5, 6 and 21 and 22, 2007 (in Spanish) :

Jan. 4, p. 1

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/eldiariopage1.pdf

Jan. 4, p. 2

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/eldiariopage2.pdf

Jan. 4, p.3

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/eldiariopage3.pdf

Jan. 5, p.14

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/DiariodeHoyJan52007p14.pdf (large file)

Jan. 6, p.16

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/DiariodeHoyJan62007p16.pdf

Jan. 21, p.13

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/DiariodeHoyJan212007p13.pdf

Jan. 21, p.12

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/DiariodeHoyJan21p12.pdf

Jan. 22, p. 16

http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007_docs/DiariodeHoyJan222007p16.pdf