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Guatemalan President Rejects Demand For Punishment Of Military Personnel Responsible For Human Rights Abuses

by Deborah Tyroler

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In an interview with the Inter Press Service, reported in Mexican newspaper EXCELSIOR (9/13/86), Guatemalan President Vinicio Cerezo stated that he rejects the demand to punish the military personnel that had violated human rights during the last 20 years. He argued that such a move could negatively affect the search for peace in Guatemala, noting that there have already been "enough deaths." According to the Mutual Support Group (Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo-GAM), a human rights organization, there are over 40,000 "desaparecidos" in Guatemala as yet unaccounted for. GAM represents the interests of the relatives of the "disappeared." President Cerezo told IPS that the four guerrilla organizations (Organizacion del Pueblo en Armas-OPRA, Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres-EGP, Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes-FAR, and Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo-PGT, the communist party) have killed many people, and yet the government is willing to pardon them if they disarm. He said, the question the army could ask "How can they judge us but forgive the guerrillas? After all, we [the military] have won the war and even transferred power to the civilians."

-- End --