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Hondurans Displaced By Contra Occupation Request National Reconciliation Commission Assistance

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 27, in a document delivered to the National Reconciliation Commission established under the regional peace plan, the Committee of Persons Displaced by War in eastern Honduras requested that the government act to return land currently occupied by the Nicaraguan contras. The document, prepared on behalf of 15,000 displaced Hondurans, was delivered to the Commission by Francisco Flores, vice president the desplazados' Committee. Flores said the document requests the commission to intercede for the displaced in the recovery of their lands, and to obtain indemnization from the contras. "The land is ours, and we do not want to continue going from one place to another," said Flores. He added that "it is sad that 15,000 Hondurans are displaced in their own country by outsiders." The Committee document stated that most of the displaced were small coffee growers from the eastern region, which in recent years had been converted into the US-backed contras' principal theater of operations to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. "The coffee growers have not been able to develop their crops, homes and schools have been completely destroyed. Consequently, hunger, misery and sickness now...prevail in our community," said the document. "We wish to return to our lands, receive indemnification for the damages and losses we have sustained, and have guarantees for our safety which has been continually threatened for denouncing these occurrences." On Nov. 25 at a press conference, President Jose Azcona Hoyo said there are no contras in Honduras. "Perhaps," he said, "there are small groups that come and go for reasons of strategic planning." According to Azcona, the majority of the contras are now located inside Nicaragua. The displaced have been demanding the return of their lands since the contras established their camps inside Honduras. At one time, for several months, they demanded indemnization from the US Embassy for damages inflicted by the contras. (Basic data from UPI, 11/27/87)

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