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Guatemalan Exiles Detained Upon Arrival; Released After International Outcry

by Deborah Tyroler

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On April 18, four members of the United Representation of the Guatemalan Opposition (RUOG) arrived at the Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City. Within moments of leaving the plane, two members of the delegation, Rolando Castillo (former dean of the University of San Carlos medical school), and Rigoberta Menchu (international spokesperson for the Committee of Peasant Unity-CUC) were arrested. The arresting officers were presumed to be members of the National Police. At a subsequent press conference, the other members of the delegation, Frank LaRue and Marta Gloria Torres (both former attorneys for Guatemalan labor organizations), called for the immediate release of their colleagues. As of 11 p.m., Castillo and Menchu had been released from custody. Held on charges of "threatening internal security" and "destabilizing the country," the 3rd Criminal Court dropped these charges for "lack of cause for their arrest." Hundreds of telexes, phone calls and telegrams were sent to President Vinicio Cerezo and other government officials within five hours of their detention. The RUOG delegation plans to remain in Guatemala until April 23. However, colleagues say the four may depart on an earlier date, result of a death threat from the Mano Blanco (White Hand), a notorious death squad. (Basic data from 11/18/88, 11/19/88 bulletins, Guatemala Health Project, Washington, DC)

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