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## **El Salvador: Positions By Democratic Convergence & National Unity Of Salvadoran Workers On Election Boycott**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front has warned that rebels will attack any vehicles on the road on election day, and that polling officials will be targeted for reprisals. The government has canceled balloting in 24 isolated districts in the departments of Morazan and Chalatenango because voters' safety cannot be guaranteed. Next, in over half of the nation's municipalities, soldiers will oversee polling places, rather than civilians appointed by the National Electoral Council. The Democratic Convergence (CD), a coalition of leftist political parties, has opted not to support the FMLN's call for a boycott. In contrast, the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS), has decided to support the boycott. In a March 14 interview with Copley News Service, Democratic Convergence strategist Hector Silva said, "The fact that we are staying in the race shows that we obviously don't favor a boycott of the elections. We would prefer that the FMLN refrain from making threats. But what they do is their business. Our political relations with them are still strong. We still consider them as allies." Silva said the CD believes that its continued presence in the electoral race increases the pressure for a political solution to the civil war. Moreover, he said, withdrawal from the race would negate the gains the coalition has made in its short life span of less than a year. Meanwhile, Silva acknowledged that the FMLN's tactics could cost the coalition many votes, particularly in rural areas of the country, where residents must rely on vehicular transportation to get to the polls. UNTS leader Julio Cesar Portillo told Copley on the same day that voting will not solve the nation's problems, and that a victory in the polls by the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) or the Christian Democrats, will only prolong the armed conflict. "Sure, we would have voted for the Democratic Convergence. But they should have pulled out of the race when the government rejected the FMLN's peace plan." The UNTS claims 400,000 members nationwide. On the morning of March 14, several hundred UNTS members marched in downtown San Salvador calling on voters to boycott the elections on Sunday. In the afternoon, thousands demonstrated in favor of a non-partisan national dialogue toward ending the war. (Basic data from Copley News Service, 03/15/89)

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