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Deborah Tyroler

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Salvadoran Government Rejects Third Party Involvement In Refugee Repatriation

by Deborah Tyroler
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At an Aug. 31 press conference in San Salvador, Vice President and Interior Minister Francisco Merino said the government would not permit third parties to meddle in the question of refugee repatriation from Honduras. He said organizations of displaced and resettled persons in San Salvador had wished to politicize the repatriation, a process "which benefits no one." On Aug. 30, a government commission met with the UN High Commission for Refugees (ACNUR) to review plans for the repatriation of about 8,000 Salvadorans currently residing in Honduran camps. Merino said that in order to guarantee "a gradual and orderly repatriation," representatives of the commissions would be permanently installed at each of the refugee camps. According to Merino, the government's provision of resettlement locales among which the repatriates can select to reside is dictated by needs to "supervise these groups and avoid guerrilla infiltration." He said that from an average 1,800 families, most of whom are comprised of women, children and elderly persons, there is at least one man "above 13 years of age who participates in terrorist activities." Merino said that integration into rebel ranks is greater at Colomoncagua camp, since the Honduran authorities cannot adequately oversee "comings and goings in the seven square kilometers south of the camp." The repatriation process is voluntary, he said, and will be regulated exclusively by the UNHCR, in coordination with the governments in Tegucigalpa and San Salvador. (Basic data from Notimex, 08/31/89)

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