9-20-1989

Timetable Established For Salvadoran Peace Talks; Reactions To Mexico City Meeting

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
Timetable Established For Salvadoran Peace Talks; Reactions To Mexico City Meeting

by Deborah Tyroler
Category/Department: General
Published: Wednesday, September 20, 1989

On Sept. 15 in Mexico City, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Salvadoran government reached an agreement calling for monthly peace talks mediated by two representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. The talks will be monitored by observers from the United Nations and the Organization of American States, unless both sides agree that a specific meeting should be private. Church mediation and the presence of observers were concessions made by the government of President Alfredo Cristiani. As part of the accord, "both sides promise not to withdraw unilaterally" from the coming negotiations. In a joint statement, the two sides said the first round of substantive talks would take place in San Jose, Costa Rica, on Oct. 16 and 17 and then continue monthly. The statement said that "the theme of discussion will be the cessation of hostilities" and that a detailed peace plan presented during the preliminary talks by the FMLN would provide a starting point for negotiations. The government delegation, headed by Justice Minister Oscar Santamaria, had opposed the presence of any foreign observers at the talks and resisted making Salvadoran bishops official mediators. The FMLN wanted to begin substantive negotiations almost immediately, in El Salvador, and with the participation of Salvadoran military representatives. Many of President Cristiani's closest associates have already publicly rejected major elements of the rebel plan. (See CAU 09/15/89 for a summary of the rebel proposal.) For instance, president of the National Republican Alliance (ARENA), Armando Calderon Sol, said in San Salvador on Sept. 14 that the proposal to move up the elections was "beyond consideration."

On Friday, the Permanent Committee on National Debate for Peace staged a march in downtown San Salvador to express support for ending the war through political negotiations. Member organizations of the Committee include 76 political, civic and religious groups. Spokespersons for the demonstrators praised the accord reached in Mexico City, and asserted that the peace process is "irreversible." Lutheran Bishop Medardo Gomez said the rebel proposal must be discussed in detail. He called on both sides to put aside mutual distrust and negotiate in good faith. Guillermo Ungo, leader of a center-left party coalition, said the talks in Mexico have reinforced the irreversible nature of the dialogue process to end the war. Demonstrators marched past San Salvador's metropolitan cathedral, currently occupied by 26 rebel war wounded. The demonstrators reasserted support for the former combatants' demand that the government observe the Geneva Convention by permitting their evacuation to foreign countries for medical treatment. In a speech broadcast nationwide on Friday evening in El Salvador, President Cristiani said the results of the Mexico meeting were positive. He reiterated that his government will not violate the constitution in any future talks and agreements with the rebels. On Sept. 17 during a homily at the San Salvador cathedral, auxiliary Archbishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez praised the openness shown by the rebels during talks in Mexico City. Rosa Chavez said, "We were all surprised by the agreements reached at the meeting because we did not expect so much." [Fighting continued Thursday in El Salvador, despite a unilateral ceasefire declared by the FMLN. Army spokespersons in San Salvador said four rebels were killed and that two guerrillas and one soldier were wounded. Rebel radio reports said the army had provoked clashes by moving into guerrilla-held territory in the northern and eastern regions. On the
same day, the Salvadoran military announced that they had mounted counterinsurgency operations against rebel units in five departments. FMLN senior commander Joaquin Villalobos, who headed the rebel delegation in Mexico City, said the rebels had no plans to extend the unilateral Sept. 13-23 unilateral ceasefire.] (Basic data from AP, Notimex, 09/15/89; New York Times, 09/16/89; AFP, 09/17/89)

-- End --