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Deborah Tyroler

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Guatemala: On Agreement Between Rebels & Political Parties

by Deborah Tyroler

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On June 1, at the conclusion of talks between representatives of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) and nine Guatemalan political parties, the two sides announced an agreement. A joint statement said that the URNG would join the parties in an assembly next year to revise the Constitution and that the guerrillas pledged not to disrupt the November general elections. The talks in El Escorial, near Madrid, Spain, began on May 28. The politicians initially demanded a rebel cease-fire, and rebel participation in the November elections. For its part, the URNG rejected the idea of disarmament prior to the start of political and social reforms. The rebels describe the reforms as necessary to rectify the causes of conflict in Guatemala for the past three decades. The URNG's agenda for reform includes a purge of the military and police, economic and social reforms oriented to improving the working and living conditions of Guatemala's poor majority, elimination of paramilitary and civil defense organizations, dismantlement of the strategic hamlets known as "model villages"; and, prosecution of human rights violators. (Basic data from AFP, 05/28/90, 05/29/90; Notimex, AP, 06/01/90; Xinhua, 05/31/90; New York Times, 06/03/90)

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