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## **Guatemala: Religion In Presidential Run-off Campaign**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Dec. 1, Jorge Carpio and Jorge Serrano launched respective campaigns for the Jan. 6 presidential run-off election. According to the Agence France Presse, Carpio's party, the National Center Union (UCN), appears to have decided to exploit a religious theme. For instance, the UCN asserts that Serrano, member of a fundamentalist church, could cause a "religious war" in Guatemala. Carpio, who denies attempts to exploit the religion question, appears in television ads shaking hands with Pope John Paul II. His campaign committee is also circulating flyers which read: "If you vote for Serrano, you're not a good Christian," and "Don't vote for Serrano because he will close the churches." Carpio has challenged Serrano to a public debate Dec. 14. Carpio is expected to present evidence that Serrano refused to shake hands with the Pope during the pontiff's 1983 visit to Guatemala. Serrano, the Solidary Action Movement (MAS) candidate, asserted that he is not ashamed of his faith and denounced Carpio's negative campaigning tactics. He said that the two should debate topics of common interest such as the economic crisis, crime and how to resolve the 30-year armed conflict. In the Nov. 11 elections, Carpio received 25,000 more votes than Serrano, but Serrano took the capital. The UCN won the largest number of seats in the national legislature, and elected the largest number of mayors. (Basic data from AFP, 12/01/90)

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