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Deborah Tyroler

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Guatemala: Independent Human Rights Organizations Testify In Geneva Before U.N. Commission

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Feb. 18, representatives of the independent Guatemalan Human Rights Commission and the Pro-Justice and Peace Committee testified before the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. According to the testimonials, 40 Guatemalans have been murdered since President Jorge Serrano took office in mid-January. In 1990, 1,513 persons were victims of extrajudicial executions, and 238 abducted (disappeared). The bodies of many of the homicide victims displayed signs of torture. The UN Commission was requested to appoint a special investigator for Guatemala. Amnesty International delegates told the UN Commission that Guatemala is one of six countries where disappearances continue to occur on a regular basis. The other five nations are Colombia, Peru, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Mauritania. Impunity enjoyed by the security forces in the six countries, said the Amnesty representatives, contributes to the high rate of disappearances. Amnesty noted that five of the six countries, including Guatemala, have elected civilian governments. [Basic data from 02/19/91 report by Guatemala Human Rights Commission (Washington, DC); ACAN-EFE, 02/18/91]

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