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Environmental Protection Demonstration In San Salvador

by Deborah Tyroler

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On June 8, over 3,000 Salvadorans marched through the streets of the capital to "raise consciousness" concerning the need to implement environmental protection measures. Ricardo Navarro, of the Salvadoran Center for Appropriate Technology (CESTA) and one of the march organizers, told reporters that ecological deterioration "affects us all and that is why it is necessary that the government and private enterprise take urgent measures." Navarro said 80% of the nation is completely deforested. Next, deforestation is responsible for a 1 meter per year drop in the water table of the aquifer serving San Salvador. A majority of produce sold in domestic markets is contaminated by human waste or pesticides. High levels of air pollution are responsible for serious respiratory ailments. Tomas Chavez, another of the demonstration's organizers, called for a rapid end to the armed conflict, and demanded that the government and the rebels negotiate in a serious fashion. He added, "As long as the war continues, the destruction of the environment and the Salvadoran people will continue to accelerate." Since 1980, vast tracts of forest land have been destroyed by incendiary bombs launched by the air force. In addition, rebels have set fire to numerous coffee plantations. On June 5, President Alfredo Cristiani formalized the creation of the National Environmental Council (CONAMA), comprised of cabinet ministers. The Council is charged with implementing policies and legislation to preserve the environment. Navarro said representatives of ecological organizations were scheduled to meet with legislators June 19. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, AFP, 06/08/91)

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