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Honduran Bishops Comment On Political Violence, Economic Policy, Role Of Military, Abortion For Rape Victims

by Deborah Tyroler

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According to a statement released Sept. 5 by the Honduran Bishops Conference, recent killings of agricultural workers and other violent incidents over land disputes reflect the government's failure to implement a just land distribution policy. In reference to recent acquisitions of agricultural cooperatives by foreign banana production and distribution companies, the bishops said "genuine land reform" has been tabled, "above all, because there is now a foreign plan...which seeks to undermine the process." The bishops asserted that problems in agriculture are likely the result of neo-liberal economic models adopted by President Rafael Callejas' government. The statement said structural adjustment has "impoverished the middle class, and pushed the poor into abject misery." The bishops called on officials to "adopt national interests for their models," instead of externally-imposed models. Next, the statement emphasized the need to improve the administration of justice to halt the rising incidence of crime and corruption: "We must build a just and humane society, giving priority to the poor so that they can live in dignity. " The bishops also questioned the recent purchase of the state-run cement plant by the armed forces. Military officers, said the bishops, "should not fall prey to the easy temptation of invading other fields of civilian activity which can distract them from their fundamental role." Next, the prelates expressed opposition to proposed legislation that would legalize abortion for rape victims. The statement said, "The woman is a victim of rape, not pregnancy. Having an abortion will not take away any of her physical or psychological pain. On the contrary, she will suffer the [added] psychic complications induced by the abortion." Finally, the bishops expressed concern over domestic violence, rape, incest and child sexual abuse. All of the above, said the bishops, reflect "loss of respect" for individual human beings' personal dignity. (Basic data from AFP, 09/05/91; ACAN-EFE, 09/05/91, 09/06/91)

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