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On May 28, about 100 indigenous nation leaders occupied the Congress to press for land and the release of colleagues who were jailed or face trial in connection with an uprising last year. The leaders vacated the building on the following day. Another 900 indigenous community members were present in Quito, surrounding the congressional building, and conducting rallies. A meeting called by the speaker of the parliament between Indian leaders and counterparts of the 11 parties in Congress failed. Representatives of just four parties made an appearance. Luis Macas, president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nations (CONAIE), said that if the congress did not commit itself within 24 hours to studying confederation demands, candidates in the 1992 general elections would be barred from entering Indian villages. He added that the Indians would also form their own parliament. Indigenous persons comprise between 40 and 45% of Ecuador’s population of about 10 million. On May 28, 1990, about 150 Indians seized a historic church to press a list of 16 demands, headed by land concessions to landless agricultural workers. The uprising led to talks with government officials which have been suspended twice. The indigenous are demanding the resignation of Luis Luna Gaibor, director of the Agrarian Reform and Colonization Institute (IERAC), as a condition for resuming negotiations. On June 2, CONAIE vice president Jose Aviles said the nation’s indigenous population would organize a larger-scale uprising than in May 1990. According to Aviles, this year’s protests would have the support of trade union and black political organizations. He did not provide details on the timing, nor nature of the uprising. In 1990, protesters barricaded roads in the Amazon and the highlands. Delivery of agricultural products to towns and cities was consequently paralyzed, which resulted in the invasion of several farms. Clashes with troops and police resulted in the death of one indigenous leader dead, and an undetermined number of persons injured and detained. An estimated 200,000 men of the Amazon nationalities are recognized as members of warrior castes. Aviles said the reasons for the resumption of the warrior role are found in the government’s lack of interest in serious negotiations to resolve indigenous demands. Intermittent talks have been mediated by the Catholic Church. Among other things, the CONAIE demands the constitutional definition of the country as a plurality of nations, legalization of land tenure, departure of religious sects from indigenous communities, dismantlement of paramilitary organizations, construction of schools and infrastructure, ecological and cultural respect for indigenous community lands and peoples, and the write-off of debts owed to government credit institutions. According to IERAC director Luna Gaibor, since President Rodrigo Borja took office three years ago, indigenous persons have received 1.3 million ha. of land. Over the previous 24 years, from 1964 to 1988, said Luna, IERAC legalized only 600,000 ha. for the use of indigenous communities. (Basic data from AFP, 05/29/91; EFE, 06/02/91)