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Guatemala: On Peace Talks

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In recent statements regarding the status of peace negotiations between the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), President Jorge Serrano laid the blame for the current impasse over human rights issues on rebel negotiators. Serrano referred to rebel proposals as intransigent and unconstitutional, adding that no further talks would be possible until progress on the human rights issue occurs. The URNG responded in a Nov. 5 communique asserting that the government's real objection was to URNG insistence that immediate steps be taken to end impunity enjoyed by public security forces, and to enforce constitutional guarantees regarding respect for human rights. The URNG asserted, "Our proposals, arguments, and premises go against powerful interests who oppose any change which would move the country towards a state of law."

In statements to reporters, UN observer Francesc Vendrell said the talks were in a "delicate" phase. Vendrell indicated that both government and rebel negotiators expressed willingness to continue negotiations, and had requested that he and mediator Guatemala City Bishop Rodolfo Quezada (president of the National Reconciliation Commission-CRN), collaborate in identifying mechanisms to break the deadlock. Quezada indicated that he was working with Vendrell and other UN advisers on a proposal to be presented to rebel and government negotiators. He added that another round of talks could take place before year-end. (Basic data from Cerigua Weekly Briefs, 11/03-09/91)

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