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Guatemala: New Government Initiatives To Improve Human Rights Conditions & Advance Peace Talks

by Deborah Tyrolo

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In a Feb. 13 communique, President Jorge Serrano announced a "seven promises" program aimed at improving human rights conditions and advancing peace talks with the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). He added that rebel and government negotiators had agreed to request that the UN appoint a human rights monitoring team for Guatemala. The seven commitments are continuation of the peace process with the URNG; subordination of the military to civilian control; investigation and swift prosecution of persons responsible for human rights violations; elimination of impunity; cooperation with national and international human rights organizations; cooperation with the Human Rights Attorney General; and, reorganization of the National Police. Serrano said the Interior Ministry budget had been increased in order to facilitate investigations and "aggressive prosecution of those responsible for human rights violations." He added that all persons responsible for abuses must be punished regardless of rank, power or wealth. According to the president, "While many countries have chosen amnesty as the way to achieve reconciliation, we have chosen justice." (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 02/13/92)

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