Guatemala: Summary Of Peace Talk Round

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On Feb. 23 in Mexico City, peace talks mediator Bishop Rodolfo Quezada Toruno told reporters that a three-day round of negotiations between rebel and government delegates ended with "important advances" in the area of human rights. Toruno said he would work with Francesc Vendrell, UN representative at the talks, to develop a proposal for a global agreement on human rights to be submitted to the two delegations. On Feb. 25 in Geneva, Jorge Rosal, Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) representative in Europe, denied that the rebels were close to signing a global accord on human rights with the government. He said suggestions that rebel negotiators are in fact prepared to sign such an agreement reflects the desire of "certain sectors which want to create the impression of significant progress in the negotiations, when in fact there are only approximations and nothing concrete." The joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of the most recent round of talks indicated that "several issues" must be dealt with before a global accord becomes viable. Rosal said, "These pending issues refer to military structures and aspects of the armed conflict, which demonstrate that there has be no change in the rigid position maintained by the army and the government...This, together with the absence of a genuine willingness to negotiate significant changes, is what is blocking progress in the negotiations." According to Rosal, described glowing accounts of progress in the talks as posturing by the government to obtain a relatively favorable ruling by the UN Human Rights Commission, currently in session in Geneva. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 02/23/92; Spanish news service EFE, 02/25/92)

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