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Nicaragua: Update On Crisis Between Legislature, Presidency & Supreme Court

by Deborah Tyroler

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The crisis of state powers entered its second month in October, with positions hardening on all sides. On Sept. 30, President Violeta Chamorro called on National Assembly president Alfredo Cesar to heed a Supreme Court ruling which declared null and void decisions reached during a Sept. 2 session of the legislature which didn't meet quorum. (For most recent previous coverage see CAU 10/02/92.) Within hours, Cesar told reporters the government had threatened to arrest him and said he feared troops might be sent to close down the National Assembly. On Oct. 2, a group of 38 deputies from parties affiliated with the National Opposition Union (UNO) staged a protest in Managua, marching from the National Assembly building to the Supreme Court. Legislators were protesting what they referred to as interference in legislative affairs by the judiciary and the executive branch. In comments broadcast over a local radio station Oct. 6, Cesar cited the example of Brazil, where massive street demonstrations played a major role in provoking the temporary suspension from office of President Fernando Collor de Mello. Cesar said that just as Brazilians had demonstrated they were "not willing to tolerate being fooled," Nicaraguans who feel betrayed by the current government should also take to the streets and "express their discontent in mass form." Meanwhile, Cesar continues to defy Chamorro's order to comply with the Supreme Court ruling. Cesar has insisted that, despite the President's stand, he will keep sending bills to her desk for signing, adding that if Chamorro fails to sign or veto the bills within the required 15-day period, he will promulgate them anyway by having the text of the bills published in national newspapers. (Sources: Inter Press Service, 09/30/92; Agence France-Presse, 10/02/92, 10/06/92)

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