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Guyana: General Elections Postponed

by Erika Harding

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On Nov. 28, President Desmond Hoyte declared a nation-wide state of emergency in order to reconvene the parliament, which was dissolved two months ago. Consequently, the general elections scheduled for Dec. 16 were postponed. Hoyte had previously been determined to see the elections take place in December, despite widespread complaints about defective voter registration lists. (See NotiSur 11/13/91 and 11/27/91 for previous coverage of controversy.) In a nationally televised speech, Hoyte said, "In the absence of an election (following the dissolution of Parliament), there could be no legal successor government. We therefore have a constitutional crisis on our hands...In the absence of a government, the inevitable result would be confusion, chaos and anarchy. As president of the republic, I obviously cannot and will not allow Guyana to be destroyed in this way." Analysts say corrections to the voter lists are expected to take between three and six months. In 1990, general elections were postponed as a result of similar problems. The first order of business for the reconvened parliament on Dec. 3 was to introduce a bill to permit the return of opposition party representatives who vacated the legislature in early March. The boycott was an expression of protest against extension of the election postponement period beginning in 1990. The executive branch has carried out the business of the parliament for the past nine months. (Sources: Agence France-Presse, 11/28/91; Inter Press Service, 12/03/91)

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