

## El Salvador

### Rebel Fronts Disagree Over Suspension of Peace Talks

*The recent decision by Salvadoran insurgents to suspend peace talks with the government constitutes a setback for President Duarte's effort to meet the terms of the Central American peace plan. However, the suspension itself appears to be a source of contention between the military and political wings of the Salvadoran rebel movement.*

The decision to break off the talks was announced in a communique from the General Command of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), the military wing of the Salvadoran rebel movement, aired on San Salvador radio on 29 October, and broadcast subsequently by the rebels' "official voice," Radio Venceremos. The communique linked the suspension to the 26 October assassination of Herbert Anaya, who headed the country's nongovernmental Human Rights Commission. It stated that continuation of the talks in the wake of the killing, which it blamed on the government, would only "create false expectations" and "divert national and international attention" from the human rights situation in the country.

In line with the rebels' longstanding effort to discredit the government, the communique pointed to the assassination as "evidence" that President Duarte and the Armed Forces High Command "have decided to intensify the policy of killing" the leaders of popular organizations and press on with their "policy of war." The communique also impugned Duarte's motives in resuming talks with the rebels last month<sup>1</sup> and dismissed his statements of support for the regional peace plan's stipulation on national reconciliation as "nothing more than a coverup" for his "real objective" to "repress all political opposition" in El Salvador.

While the suspension of the talks effectively bars Duarte from claiming any real progress toward resolving the conflict as the 5 November target date for implementing the provisions of the regional accord approaches, the

<sup>1</sup> See the *Trends* of 15 October, pages 9-11.

[REDACTED]

communique implied that the rebels would return to the dialogue at some future date. It said the rebels "will continue to review developments to further the dialogue" while striving to achieve "a broad national consensus to ensure a patriotic solution" to the conflict.

**Signs of Contention** Although Guillermo Ungo, president of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), the political wing of the revolutionary movement, has echoed the FMLN's assessment that Anaya's assassination signals heightened repression in El Salvador, he has made it clear that his organization opposes the decision to break off the dialogue. In remarks published in the San Salvador newspaper *El Mundo* on 2 November, Ungo frankly admitted that the FDR and the FMLN hold "different views" on this matter. While he denied that the disagreement has divided the two fronts, he said the dialogue must be resumed "immediately." At the same time, he put the onus for this on the government, stressing that it will have to put forward "serious" proposals.

The FMLN's strong reaction to Anaya's assassination may reflect an effort to discourage FDR leaders from following through with their announced plan to return to El Salvador to participate in a political system that the FMLN has repeatedly denounced as "antidemocratic." Judging by Ungo's remarks on this subject in an interview with AFP on 1 November, the FDR is continuing to make plans to send its top leaders to El Salvador, despite the assassination. Ungo said that while he and FDR Vice President Ruben Zamora "have yet to work out the details" of their return, "we expect to do so very soon."

FDR leaders deny that their plan to engage in political activity inside El Salvador is a source of contention between the two fronts. However, Zamora, in discussing his possible return in an interview aired on Salvadoran television on 28 September, appeared to discount the FMLN's oft-stated claim that El Salvador lacks the necessary conditions for leftist political activity. While Zamora acknowledged that "the matter of conditions has to be taken into account," he stressed that "the important point" is that "democracy is not given as a gift to anyone," but, rather, "something that has to be constructed, built." He went on to say that "it would not be right" for him to remain outside the country because "there is no democracy" there. "On the contrary," he said, "my attitude and my party's attitude is to return and work to build a democracy, which means taking risks." [REDACTED]