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State terrorism (editorial)

This week, following Judge Zamora's decision to apply the charges of terrorism, conspiracy and acts preparatory to terrorism to the direct authors of the Jesuit murders, the defense rejected the new charges. Although the arguments used by the defense are irregular from any point of view, they clearly illustrate the institutional, legal and ideological basis which encourages State terror and guarantees its impunity.

According to the defense, "These types of crimes cannot be applied to members of the Armed Forces, who are only complying with their constitutional duties," adding, "The law establishes that acts preparatory to terrorism are those which are carried out by clandestine organizations, and the Armed Forces is not an institution which has been operating clandestinely." It is precisely the non-clandestine and institutional nature of the acts to which the defense attorneys refer, as well as the law they cite, which make the massacre not any common act of terrorism, but rather one of State terrorism.

Far from excusing or diminishing the magnitude of the crimes committed by the murderers, the arguments used by the defense have instead put the case in its proper perspective: it was not an isolated and irrational act committed by a few individuals, but rather a problem of an institutional nature. It is not just a matter of whether or not the law can distinguish between crimes and abuses committed by common citizens and those committed by the Armed Forces, something which--although in and of itself absurd--could be overcome by modifying the language of the law. The underlying issue concerns the

¹ Washington Office on Latin America, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, #404, Washington, DC, 20002, phone: 202-544-8045, fax: 202-546-5288.

practices and ideologies reflected in the law, since if crimes could be characterized in one way or another depending upon the author's membership in an institution, it is because good intentions are presumed on the part of members of the Armed Forces, regardless of the violations or terror they spread. This is precisely what lies at the root of all forms of totalitarianism, and it encourages and legitimizes the most abominable institutional violations of human rights.

The problem goes much farther than the dehumanizing training and indoctrination used to educate the members of the Armed Forces. Institutions no less important than the news media, particularly the morning dailies, promote and disseminate this totalitarian ideology by routinely calling certain actions or statements "terrorist" just because they come from rebels or opposition figures; they also disguise clear acts of barbarism and terror committed by the Armed Forces by characterizing them as "patriotic anti-communism" and as actions taken "in compliance with constitutional duties."

Thus it is not enough for the U.N. Special Rapporteur, Dr. Pastor Ridruejo, to limit himself to stating in his reports that the torture and violations carried out by the army and security forces are not dictated by government policy. In a State such as ours, where the habit of psychological or physical terror is so deeply rooted, there is no need to formulate a specific policy of repression and terrorism, although some powerful groups within the government and army are perennially tempted to do so. The truly serious aspect of all this is the fact that any State policy, whose fundamental goal does not include an effective struggle against this habit of abuse and the elimination of the practice of deforming and "disinforming" public opinion and military minds, is just an integral part of State terrorism.

The fight against terrorism and the struggle to democratize society could be carried out much more honestly and effectively by sticking to the proven facts and figures instead of engaging in the belligerent Manicheism which prevails in the State and power structures. And the confirmed human rights figures for the last six-month period (May-October) show 27 murders committed by death squads, 21 by the Armed Forces and seven by the FMLN. Taken both as a whole and separately, these figures are unacceptable, but they clearly indicate where the chief source of terror is to be found in this country.

However, reducing things to a simple analysis of figures and statistical comparisons with other terror-filled periods--remote or recent--is of little use in clarifying the true situation and precarious nature of human rights in El Salvador. Three months ago, the New York Times reported on a plan drawn up by the Armed Forces and ARENA extremists to wipe out all civilian opposition. This month the Washington Post also mentioned the plan, and this week the FMLN denounced its existence.

The government and the army have flatly rejected the rebel charges, although U.S. State Department officials themselves have insistently warned that a substantial cut in military aid would provoke a violent reaction within the structures of State terror. If we add to this the fact that the first agreements on demilitarization and military impunity are expected to be reached in the next round of peace talks, we already have the two factors which together could mean the end of impunity, and perhaps punishment for the death squads; but by the same token, they could also provoke paroxysms of violence on the part of the latter. The third key which might unleash the furies would be to identify the intellectual authors of the UCA massacre, but this is a key which the North Americans guard as jealously as their own national security.

It is to be hoped that the U.S. intelligence sources who had advance knowledge of

the plan to assassinate the Jesuits will now take steps in time to stop new acts of barbarism on the part of their Salvadoran allies.

New FMLN offensive

Insurgent military activity has increased dramatically over the last few weeks, constituting the greatest military escalation of the year. During the first 17 days of the month alone, the FMLN claimed to have inflicted 181 army casualties and to have damaged or destroyed 68 electrical structures. Despite the obvious indications, however, Vice-Minister for Public Security Col. Inocente Orlando Montano told the press on November 19 that FMLN activity was at a low ebb and that it had "dismantled" its plans to launch a new large-scale offensive. According to Montano, this was due to a combination of factors: on the one hand, international pressure against this type of violence, and on the other, the widespread deployment of government troops aimed at neutralizing rebel mobility. Less than 24 hours after Montano made these statements, the FMLN launched its largest nationwide military action since the November 1989 offensive.

The new rebel campaign, which began formally on November 20, came in response to the intense ongoing counter-insurgency operations mounted by the army during the last several months. The FMLN began to lay the groundwork for its new offensive by gradually escalating its level of activity. During the two weeks before the beginning of the actual military campaign, the press reported 15 clashes in seven departments, as well as six guerrilla attacks on government positions in five departments. In San Salvador, urban commando attacks of all types began to proliferate (sabotage of the electrical system, attacks against electrical substations, ambushes of military patrols and attacks on civil defense posts), turning the capital into a giant war arena. The rebel attack on Jucuarán Battalion troops stationed in San Agustín (Usulután) was particularly important: according to Radio Farabundo Martí, FMLN units surrounded the troops and inflicted 48 casualties (14 dead and 34 wounded), recuperating in the process some 15 M-16 rifles, two M-60 machine guns, communications equipment and other war materiel.

In the early hours of November 20, insurgent forces staged simultaneous attacks on government positions in seven departments and eleven towns located in the central, northern and eastern parts of the country. During the first two days alone, the number and intensity of the actions produced 33 dead and 160 wounded on the government side and 44 dead and 39 wounded among the rebels, according to reports from the Armed Forces Press Office (COPREFA).

The principal rebel action in San Salvador consisted of another attack--the second in six weeks although of a lesser scale--on the Air Force barracks located in Ilopango, just east of the capital. The FMLN launched an intense mortar and rifle barrage from the southwestern side of nearby Colonia Santa Lucía. During the fighting, which went on for two hours, the FMLN wounded four members of the Airborne Battalion and destroyed an O-2 reconnaissance plane. Air Force troops recuperated a 57mm artillery piece as well as 21 grenades and dynamite sticks.

In the towns of Apopa, Nejapa and Quezaltepeque (La Libertad), rebel columns attacked civil defense, National Police and National Guard positions. The FMLN also destroyed two banks and one business in Quezaltepeque, while in Nejapa it attacked the security garrison of the MECAFE coffee processing plant. In Apopa, the rebels held

positions in a number of poor neighborhoods. The fighting here was particularly fierce and continued without interruption for over 15 hours. The casualty toll in the three towns was eight army dead and 13 wounded, as well as 15 civilians wounded.

In Chalatenango, the FMLN attacked the provincial capital and took over the towns of La Laguna, Dulce Nombre and Comalapa. According to COPREFA, the actions left 14 First Military Detachment troops dead and 48 wounded, while 18 rebels were reported killed. Eleven civilians were reported killed and 62 wounded.

In the eastern zone, the FMLN attacked the Sixth Military Brigade headquarters in Usulután, military positions on the outskirts of the city of San Miguel, and Fourth Military Detachment positions in the provincial capital of San Francisco Gotera (Morazán). According to official figures, the Morazán actions left 21 insurgents and five army troops dead, with 35 rebels and 23 soldiers wounded. Two civilians were also reported killed, as well as five wounded. In La Paz, the FMLN attacked the Entre Rios cotton cooperative, burning three crop dusters and causing some 3 million colones (\$375,000) in damages. The rebels also stepped up their sabotage of electrical structures, toppling 36 pylons along high-voltage lines.

The FMLN called its national campaign "Punishment to the Anti-Democratic Armed Forces," saying it was a necessary measure to help break the deadlock in the negotiations. According to the FMLN, it was imperative to resort to military pressure given the constant army counter-insurgency operations against guerrilla-held areas, the lack of progress in trying those responsible for the UCA massacre, and the government's intransigence around the issue of demilitarizing society; the rebels said they therefore reserved the right to launch a large-scale offensive in the short or medium run if no progress was seen in achieving a political settlement to the war. At the same time, the FMLN announced that its current military campaign marks the beginning of a process in which its ranks will be transformed into a National Army for Democracy, which would have the same command structure as the government army.

After two days of besieging government positions just north of the capital, the rebels spread their operations to the eastern part of the country, but without reducing urban commando attacks in San Salvador. Government sources portrayed the rebels' withdrawal from the northern towns as the end of the military campaign, attributing it to international pressure. FMLN spokespersons denied that the campaign had ended and announced that its forces would keep up the military pressure. One rebel commander declared, "what those men in government are trying to do is achieve with one little statement what 50,000 troops have been unable to do--that is, how to stop to a guerrilla army which, in just a few hours of combat, has put them in a very difficult situation." On November 22, rebel columns attacked an electrical substation in a San Salvador suburb with mortars and RPG-7 rocket launchers for 45 minutes, yet were unable to cause any significant damage to the installations. Combined troops from the First Infantry Brigade, the Atlacatl Battalion and the Seventh Military Detachment drove back the insurgent forces. The joint command of the FMLN's "Modesto Ramírez" Central Front reported simultaneous attacks on the security cordons around the Joint General Staff, producing eight army casualties. Another soldier was wounded after urban commandos threw a bomb at a military checkpoint located at the western entry to the University of El Salvador. Urban commandos also dynamited five banks as part of a new sabotage campaign launched to protest the government's decision to privatize the banking system. Meanwhile, continuous sabotage of the electrical system

produced power deficits of up to 70% at a time.

In the interior of the country, the press reported three battles and four FMLN attacks on army positions in four departments located in the central and eastern parts of the country. In La Libertad, rebel columns attacked the civil defense post in Zaragoza, killing one defense member and wounding a sergeant. In Suchitoto (Cuscatlán), insurgent forces launched a fierce attack on National Police and civil defense garrisons using rifles, machine guns and rocket launchers. In the nearby village of Milingo, the FMLN damaged a helicopter with rifle fire. In San Vicente, eight troops from the Fifth Brigade were killed when a military patrol was ambushed along the road to Tecoluca. Two civilians were also killed in cross fire during the attack. Other battles took place near Tecoluca, leaving five Fifth Brigade troops and four rebels dead. On the night of November 22, the FMLN attacked Third Brigade headquarters in the city of San Miguel with 81mm mortars, killing five soldiers and wounding four. Other military actions were registered in the village of Oromontique, where one insurgent was reported killed and four were wounded.

The number and intensity of military actions in the department of Usulután is worth noting. Besides having seen the fiercest fighting of the military campaign, Usulután has also been the scene of a new development in the war which could change its course, if the FMLN decides to institutionalize the use of land-to-air missiles such as the one used on November 23 to down an A-37 "Dragonfly" fighter-bomber. The missiles could do much to neutralize the military advantage enjoyed until now by the Air Force. In the past, air power has been decisive for the army, allowing it to soften up rebel positions, deploy its troops quickly from one place to another and guarantee supplies.

During combats sustained in Usulután over the last week, besides the A-37 (the third such aircraft shot down during the war), the FMLN also downed an O-2 reconnaissance airplane and a helicopter. The A-37 was shot down by the FMLN with a Soviet-made SAM-7 missile while it was carrying out a support mission for infantry units engaged in fierce fighting near the town of Santa Elena, while the helicopter was hit by an RPG-2 rocket launcher near the town of Jiquilisco.

Press reports show a total of four face-to-face combats and five FMLN attacks on army positions in Usulután during the course of the campaign. In one incident, Atonal Battalion troops clashed with rebel columns while carrying out a search operation to dislodge rebels near the Hacienda Santa Teresa, leaving two guerrillas dead; another two rebels were killed in Santa Elena. Other Atonal troops fought in the village of Los Amates, where one was wounded, while five soldiers from the Sixth Brigade were killed during fighting with the rebels between San Marcos Lempa and Jiquilisco.

The FMLN also harassed National Guard and Atonal Battalion positions in Mercedes Umana with rifle fire and 81mm mortars, leaving two government troops wounded. There were other clashes in the southern part of Usulután, the provincial capital, which left five rebels and one soldier dead and another five soldiers wounded. The FMLN also destroyed the San Ambrosio coffee processing plant. In Ozatlán, a soldier was wounded when the army attempted to drive back another rebel attack. Eleven soldiers were killed and 13 were wounded on the outskirts of Jucuarán, while COPREFA also reported four rebel dead in the clashes.

This recent rebel campaign only reinforces the urgency of settling the conflict by political means. It can only be hoped that it will not take even higher levels of military confrontation and destruction for the two contending forces to become aware of this fact.

Dialogue: a long tunnel

One year after the November offensive, and eight months after negotiations between the government and the FMLN were renewed under U.N. auspices, the process continues to be in doubt. U.N. mediator Alvaro de Soto, in Geneva for two days to attend a meeting of experts studying aspects of the Salvadoran legal system related to the peace process on November 15, said that this was a "propitious" moment for reaching agreements in the talks. He also announced that "possibly in December" the U.N. would open an office in San Salvador to prepare its work of monitoring the peace process. According to de Soto, the office would play an "observer" role in the area of respect for human rights, control over the Armed Forces, cease-fire and elections, on which a report would be sent to the U.N. Security Council. A week earlier, de Soto said in Caracas that the negotiations were "reaching a defining moment for peace."

On the government side, the Minister of Justice and spokesperson for the government's negotiating commission, Oscar Santamaría, reported in Guatemala on November 12 that the government and the FMLN had been maintaining "secret contacts" since the last meeting held in Mexico in October, in order to "prepare a public meeting" in Mexico or Caracas. The following day, President Cristiani indicated in Tokyo--where he attended the coronation of Emperor Akihito--that his government had asked Perez de Cuellar to seek "new methods" to initiate the talks again, saying they had fallen into a "lethargic phase," for which he blamed the FMLN.

The FMLN, for its part, announced in Costa Rica on November 26 a proposal for a joint cease-fire in January 1991, but only if an agreement is reached on the issue of the Armed Forces before the end of this year. Miguel Saenz, of the FMLN's political-diplomatic commission, stated that the proposal was already in the hands of the U.N. Secretary General.

All these expressions and initiatives notwithstanding, the talks are not going forward and the war is on an upward swing. As ever, the chief "stumbling block" continues to be the Armed Forces, as even de Soto acknowledged in Venezuela on November 6 (EFE cable dateline Caracas, 11/6). Last November, Defense Minister Col. René Emilio Ponce promised that the military would carry out "all sorts of [internal] reforms and restructuring" in order to help the peace process, whether or not the FMLN was demanding them. But in fact, this "restructuring" has been nothing more than simple command rotations, or at best--when the U.S. has put the most pressure on--the most corrupt officers have been sent abroad as military attaches. The Armed Forces is completely closed to any restructuring proposal which goes any farther than that. On November 8, Vice-Minister of Defense Col. Juan Orlando Zepeda stated emphatically, "If the FMLN persists in using the disappearance of the Armed Forces as an obstacle and as a point of honor, there will be no progress in the negotiations." He added, "The issue of the existence of the Armed Forces is not on the table. We are an institution which was born and has lived with the Republic, the principal wall [which protects society] from the guerrillas, and the guarantee which allows democracy to proceed and develop."

After the failure of its proposal for a unilateral cease-fire which President Cristiani brought before the U.N. last October, and after the political setback it suffered at the hands of the U.S. Congress when military aid was cut, the government is now trying to

manipulate the talks with an eye on the upcoming legislative and municipal elections. On November 17, Santamaria declared that there was a good chance that agreements would be reached soon, especially around election issues, in order to "generate the proper atmosphere for normal voting conditions."

The FMLN, although evidently willing to discuss the issue of elections, has nonetheless rejected this new attempt to manipulate the talks, aimed not at channeling them toward peace with justice but rather toward an election victory for ARENA. On November 13, the FMLN General Command published a communique stating, "Unless agreements are reached in the overall talks, and especially on the issue of the Armed Forces, the elections will be neither free nor honest," adding that the opposition parties will find themselves at a disadvantage because the country will be "militarized and in the middle of an even more widespread war." The FMLN admitted that, in general terms, the elections are "perfectly fitting" to a democratic system, but claims the March vote will take place in a "climate of repression" if no agreements on the Armed Forces are reached, adding that the reforms proposed by the Interparty Commission "are not enough to guarantee democratic elections" (ACAN-EFE, 11/13).

The week before, in another communique broadcast over Radio Farabundo Marti, the FMLN asserted that "the power of the military continues to dominate any other power, even the power of the vote," and that therefore, if no agreements are reached around demilitarization, "the power of the vote will be nothing more than an illusory publicity slogan." In an article distributed to the press on November 1, Joaquín Villalobos wrote, "[The elections] are not an option for peace as long as no fundamental agreements are reached in the negotiations on the issue of the Armed Forces," because "the military will try to use [the elections] to make war, and the opposition will be persecuted and attacked." According to Villalobos, "The only way to make [the elections] credible again would be if the FMLN provided a minimum level of support...[but]...if they want the elections to be legitimate they had better negotiate seriously and quickly."

Since the last round of talks, Alvaro de Soto has mediated intensely between the two sides in order to prepare the next round, which at first was scheduled for the first week of November and then postponed until the end of the month; now it has been postponed once again until an undetermined date. However, the downing of an A-37 airplane with a SAM-7 missile last November 23, in Usulután, which has practically caused outrage within the Armed Forces, will probably have an effect on the future--already dim--of the talks.

IDHUCA Report: Human Rights and the escalation of the war

On November 20, the FMLN launched a military campaign called "Punishment to the Anti-Democratic Armed Forces." The nationwide military maneuver has so far included attacks on the Air Force, the Sixth Infantry Brigade in Usulután, the Third Infantry Brigade in San Miguel, the Fourth Military Detachment in San Francisco Gotera, and lesser military positions in Zacatecoluca, Apopa, Nejapa, Quezaltepeque and other areas.

According to a communique published the same day, the FMLN General Command "decided to respond militarily to the Armed Forces' impunity, repression and military

operations, as well as the intransigence of the government, which refuses to carry out a complete demilitarization of society, clinging instead to a criminal army."

It is still too soon to draw up a complete report or evaluation of the most recent events; partial reports depict a large number of casualties on both sides, as well as among the civilian population, although Auxiliary Bishop Rosa Chávez recognized in his November 25 homily that "both sides did what they could to avoid harming civilians" (*Diario Latino*, 11/26).

According to official reports, in less than 24 hours the FMLN killed twelve government soldiers and wounded 76. The Armed Forces Press Office (COPREFA) also reported ten guerrillas and three civilians killed in the first day's fighting. For its part, the FMLN reported that its forces had inflicted 150 casualties on the army, and had damaged and destroyed military equipment (*Diario Latino*, 11/21). The Legal Assistance Office of the Archdiocese reported the deaths of 18 civilians and 36 others who could not be identified, among them guerrilla combatants, during the week of November 16-23. According to the Church, the Armed Forces acknowledged having suffered 62 casualties (*Diario Latino*, 11/26).

The government condemned the attacks and asked for the people's support: "This criminal aggression by the FMLN against the civilian population has met up with an Armed Forces prepared to comply with its constitutional duty, which has allowed it to counter and drive back the FMLN terrorist groups" (*Diario Latino*, 11/21). The governmental Human Rights Commission denounced and condemned the actions carried out by FMLN commandos against the civilian population (*Diario Latino*, 11/22).

The FMLN responded by calling the government's position "a lie, since the anti-democratic Armed Forces has maintained ongoing offensives against our zones, and because just a few hours before our campaign began, the military was saying that the FMLN no longer had any military capacity" (*Diario Latino*, 11/21).

Despite the limited information available, it is important to point out that the nation is still at war, and that all efforts must be aimed at reaching a lasting settlement. Once again, the latest events constitute unequivocal proof of this. In his November 25 homily, Bishop Rosa Chávez declared, "We condemn military actions no matter what their origin", and reiterated that "the Catholic Church can do no more than speak out for a peaceful settlement to the war and call upon both sides to reach agreements in order to stop harming the population" (*Diario Latino*, 11/26).

On November 20, the U.N. General Secretary himself, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, said he was "concerned" about the FMLN attacks on military targets in El Salvador, but also pointed out that the dialogue process did not include "a previous commitment to end military actions" (*La Prensa Gráfica*, 11/21).

Along with these stepped-up military actions, there has been a new series of searches and threats aimed at grassroots movement organizations and leaders as well as opposition politicians. On November 21, Lutheran bishop Medardo Gómez said, "We are afraid that with these increased FMLN military actions, the reaction of the Armed Forces will be against the churches and humanitarian institutions." On November 20, the government published telephone numbers any citizen can call to report on suspicious movements. Defense Minister Col. Rene Emilio Ponce called upon the people to collaborate with the Armed Forces by denouncing any suspicious activities (*Diario de Hoy*, 11/22).

Over the last month, since the failed attack on the Armed Forces Joint General Staff

with a "tepezcuintle" (propane gas tank filled with explosives), which killed two children in colonia San Francisco, the military has carried out household searches throughout the capital "in search of tepezcuintles." This period has also seen a notable increase in searches of offices housing humanitarian organizations.

During the past several weeks, First Brigade soldiers have searched the offices of COACES (Confederation of Cooperative Associations of El Salvador), CREDHO (humanitarian organization belonging to the Episcopal Church) and ASPS (Salvadoran Association of Health Promoters). The offices and warehouse belonging to the Congregation of Mothers, in Perquin (Morazan), were ransacked on November 15 by soldiers from the Arce Battalion. According to residents, the soldiers took milk, sugar and flour, as well as documents and files, although the women later were able to convince them to return some of the confiscated items. On November 23, National Police agents searched the offices of CODYDES (Committee of Unemployed and Dismissed Workers) without a warrant. On November 28, the offices of the CORDES Foundation (assistance to repopulations) were searched by "unidentified individuals" for the second time in three months.

The commander of the Fourth Military Detachment, Lt. Col. Oscar Leon Linares, claimed that a vehicle full of people arrived at the offices of PADECOES (Foundation for Communal Development) in San Francisco Gotera the night before the guerrilla attack, and that one of the guerrillas killed in the attack was a repatriate living in Segundo Montes City. PADECOES and Segundo Montes City deny these charges. A PADECOES leader replied that "the army is looking for excuses to justify more repression against the people."

In this context of growing tensions, in which the government has persisted in its old habit of blaming FMLN actions on more vulnerable sectors of society, the FMLN sent a letter to the U.N. Secretary General describing an alleged plan drawn up by the government and the Armed Forces to eliminate leaders of the church, trade unions, political parties and grassroots organizations (*Diario Latino*, 11/28). "For the insurgents, the same statements made recently by President Alfredo Cristiani, when he said that the latest military incidents would provoke 'violent actions on the part of hard-line sectors', are a way to justify violent actions against the opposition."

Given last year's events, the FMLN's denunciation should be taken very seriously. It is enough to recall the massacre of the FENASTRAS union members; the attacks against opposition leaders; the assassination of Hector Oquelí Colindres; the massacre of the Jesuits; Archbishop Rivera Damas' denunciation of a Plan Djakarta aimed at eliminating the opposition, including himself and the Auxiliary Bishop; and above all, the fact that those responsible for these and other crimes have gone unpunished and that the great majority of the incidents have not even been investigated. Nor does it seem like much has been done to avoid possible repetitions. International pressure can serve as a deterrent for a time, but an increase in military activity on the part of the FMLN--such as last year's offensive--can easily take the brakes off.

What is the meaning of all these events? On the one hand, the governmental Human Rights Commission's claim that "the FMLN attacks are against the civilian population" is not true. Attacking the civilian population is one thing; attacking a military target is another. These declarations are clearly making propagandistic use of the language of international humanitarian law, but they have no legal validity. The international community recognizes that there is a war going on in El Salvador, and consequently supports dialogue and negotiations at the highest levels.

That means that the war must be ended. With agreements. And in good faith. It is the war as a whole which has negative repercussions on the civilian population. Both sides are responsible, in one way or another, for different violations of international humanitarian law, although not in the same measure.

Thus on the one hand, the government and the FMLN must take all necessary measures to comply with the Human Rights Agreement signed in San José last July 26, in terms of humanizing the conflict. To a certain extent, the Agreement seems to have had some influence in limiting the behavior of both sides during this latest FMLN campaign, especially compared with what occurred during the November 1989 offensive. Nonetheless, as Auxiliary Bishop Rosa Chávez pointed out, "Both sides must seek the most suitable political agreements in order to stop poisoning the atmosphere and so that hope for peace will not be lost due to the stepped-up military actions launched by the guerrillas." The need to comply fully with the already-accepted commitments, to begin the work of the U.N. verification mission which will reinforce these commitments, and to negotiate those agreements necessary for reaching a cease-fire, could not be more obvious.

On the other hand, as we have pointed out in previous articles, the responsibility of the State is not only to respect human rights, but also to guarantee them. In our commentary "The UCA case and the duties of the State" (*Proceso 452*) we focused on the State's obligation to prevent violations. It concerns us to see history repeating itself today. Instead of warning that "hard-line sectors" will react violently if the FMLN carries out military actions, it is incumbent upon the President of the Republic and the government to take all necessary measures to prevent the "hard-line sectors" from committing new violations and acting with impunity. The President's statements should clearly reject such conduct. Unfortunately, there is still no sign that the government's policy has changed in this regard. Disinformation and threats continue, while the government has still not acted to take the necessary measures to end impunity. It is to be hoped that the government and the Armed Forces will soon realize that they can no longer continue in this fashion; that they must assume their duties to respect and guarantee human rights in accord with their international commitments, and in this way make lasting peace possible.