

# URNG-Government Dialogue: Indians Excluded Once Again

*On March 31, Guatemala's government and the leftist umbrella guerrilla group National Guatemalan Revolutionary Union (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, URNG) signed an accord to protect the rights of the Maya Indian people. As we reported in the last issue of Abya Yala News (see Estuardo Zapeta, "Guatemala Peace Talks: Are Maya Rights Negotiable", vol. 8, no. 4), these peace talks have excluded the Maya people who make up a majority of Guatemala's population. In the recently-signed pact, the government promised to promote constitutional reforms to recognize the Maya Indians, promote their rights, end racial discrimination and sexual harassment, respect traditional dress and languages, and promote bilingual education. Maya organizations greeted the pact as a cautious first step and stated that the effect that it would have on their struggle to achieve their demands remained to be seen. The following statement is from the League of Organizations of the Maya People of Guatemala (Coordinación de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala, COPMAGUA, also known by its Maya acronym SAJB'ICHIL) on these negotiations.*

## COPMAGUA Statement on Peace Negotiations

**T**he second Grand Assembly of SAJB'ICHIL, the League of Organizations of the Maya People of Guatemala (COPMAGUA), in view of the agreement "Identity and Rights of Indigenous People" which the Republic of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) signed on March 31, 1995, in Mexico City, having been asked to analyze the peace negotiations;

Concludes That:

1) This accord does not necessarily fulfill all of our aspirations and demands, but it is the minimal product of five hundred years of resistance, three decades of an internal armed conflict, and above all the struggle of the Maya people together with the support of the civilian population. It is one of the tools to begin the eradication of the social injustice, discrimination, oppression and colonialism that we suffer today.

2) This Agreement is a minimal but significant step to strengthen the hope of the Maya people to end the marginalization, oppression, discrimination, dominance, exploitation and colonialism that we suffer.

3) The Maya people will continue to work and struggle to achieve all of our rights and demands.

4) The contents of the Agreement will only be effective if all parties demonstrate the political willingness to comply with the terms of the agreement, with the full participation of the Maya people.

5) The leagues and organizations present at the signing of the agreement endow SAJB'ICHIL with the power to be the representative and voice of the Maya

people to all of the parties involved (the government, the army, and the URNG) to oversee the implementation and verification of the terms of the Agreement, as well as with international groups.

6) We recognize that the Agreement was in part made possible by the support of the United Nations as part of its Global Peace Process, as well as by the support of the group of friendly countries.

It Commits Itself To:

1) Disseminate fully the agreement, "Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Communities" to communities, villages and hamlets in the Maya languages through all of the possible means of communication.

2) Make all of the Maya organizations as well as the civilian population not only aware of the agreement, but also to involve them in its application and compliance.

3) Conduct consultations with its base organizations and other Maya organizations for the implementation of the necessary mechanisms and the compliance of the agreement by those who signed it.

Decides To:

Conduct its third Grand Assembly on B'ELEJE' NO'J (May 2, 1995) with the objective of making decisions regarding how to create work commissions to boost the agreement, as well as its functions and tasks. ☺

B'OKO', WAQI' Q'ANIL' ☺

Chimaltenango, April 3, 1995