

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS:

For the first time in our history, representatives of the displaced in Guatemala, from different departments and counties in the country have united to form the NATIONAL COUNCIL OF DISPLACED PERSONS OF GUATEMALA (CONDEG) with our own Board of Directors.

So that you know our organization and consider granting us your help we will inform you of:

- Our origin and predicament
- How CONDEG was born.
- What our Objectives are.
- How our Organization is.

We hope we will be able to talk directly with you in order to know each other better and start working together to attain our legitimate rights as Guatemalan citizens and be able to contribute in the task of making Guatemala a country where there is peace and justice for all, with full participation of all men women, children, elders, indigenous groups and "ladinos".

I. OUR ORIGIN AND ACTUAL PREDICAMENT:

We, the displaced of Guatemala, are hundreds of thousands of persons from different departments of the country (El Petén, Izabal, Alta and Baja Verapaz, Sololá, Totonicapán, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Suchitepéquez, Quetzaltenango, Retalhuleu, El Quiché, Escuintla, Santa Rosa, etc.), that due to violence or removal of our lands, were forced to abandon our homes, our communities and our towns. Many of our houses have been burned (during the last 8 years more than 400 villages were burned and destroyed), and many of our relatives killed.

For some of us, our condition as displaced begins several decades ago, but the majority date to the beginning of the 80's. The larger part of us fled and hid in towns and cities, principally in the capital city and the country's coasts in order to protect our lives. From then on we have lived in fear and suffering: we live in poverty, in marginal neigh-

borhoods and others migrate from farm to farm looking for jobs.

Our sufferings are multiple. Our families have disintegrated and our cultural identity is being shattered due to the conditions that we have to live in. During all these years we have survived with low incomes from temporary, poorly paid jobs, or from peddling meager wares in the streets. For a large quantity of displaced it is not possible to get a job because we are requested to submit documents certifying that we have never committed crimes, letters of recommendation, etc., when we do not even have identification cards because we lost them when we fled our communities and left all our belongings. Many of us have returned to our old towns to request our ID's but the authorities deny us that right because they are afraid that we will reclaim our land and our houses. We therefore live as strangers in our own country.

We do not have the necessary public services such as potable water, electricity, etc. and we live in shacks built from used wood, cardboards and tinplates that have been given to us or that we buy. Others of us live in crowded rooms that we rent at very high prices, suffering from all kinds of scarcities.

For our children there are no schools, no health care, and in addition of their growing up in malnourishment, they have no future which guarantees them the minimum rights as Guatemalans and Human Beings. In addition to all of that, we have to take into account the discrimination we have to endure, because the majority of us belong to indigenous groups.

As we have said before, many of us have been suffering these conditions for several decades already, due to the poverty that we suffered in the countryside and in our communities, principally due to the lack of land to work in and of the plunders we had to endure. The amount of displaced increased during the last eight years, due to the beastly repression against our communities. We know that there are some institutions or organizations that state that there are almost one million displaced Guatemalans in these con-

ditions.

In spite of the facts that we are a large segment, the poverty stricken conditions that we live in and that we live in fear and despondency — since the displaced that have been killed or kidnapped in the farms are no small number — we feel that we are the most forgotten and abandoned of our society, principally by the government and its institutions. That is why in this historical date, for us the displaced Guatemalans, upon the formation of our Organization, we want to make our existence known to our people and to the people of the world.

II. HOW CONDEG WAS BORN:

In view of our difficult situation to survive in the midst of the complete indifference of the government to resolve our serious problems, more than two years ago groups of displaced families from different departments and from the capital city, joined efforts to unite. We began by visiting each other to exchange views and opinions on our situation and to jointly look for ways to solve our greatest problems. Our groups have been growing, as more families and individuals join.

THE FIRST MEETING

On the 5th of March 1989 we were able to hold our first meeting, with the participation of a great number of delegates from the different departments and counties, as well as from the capital city.

For the first time, representatives of hundreds of displaced gathered together and expressed our sufferings and thoughts. The need to help one another became clear to us.

SECOND AND THIRD MEETINGS

On the 9th of April and June 1989 we held second and third meetings. In these occasions we noted the growth of the groups. We set new goals, new steps to take, highligh-

ting the necessity of forming our own Organization to permanently make our reality and our revindication known, as well as make us present in our country's social, economic and political life.

HOW OUR ORGANIZATION, THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF DISPLACED PERSONS OF GUATEMALA, CONDEG WAS BORN.

With the formation of our CONDEG we exercise the rights granted to us by the Nation's Constitution and follow the spirit set forth by the Esquipulas II peace talks. In this sense, we, the displaced take a great step forward in the midst of the desolate state in which we live in. We believe that we now can stimulate all possible activities to reach our goals so that our most serious problems are felt and resolved.

We want our CONDEG to be a large, representative and broad organization where all the displaced can participate: men, women, children and elders with no discrimination of race or religion. We will make all necessary efforts so that our Organization has the necessary vigor to make our voice be heard and our thoughts known. But we are conscious that to reach these objectives we need all the solidary support of the rest of the popular, democratic, progressive and religious organizations, as well as of the democratic people and institutions of the world. In this manner we will progress in the effort of regaining our rights as citizens, as Guatemalans and as Human Beings.

III. OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Exercise our right to organize ourselves in freedom.
2. Regain our civil, individual identity as Guatemalan citizens.
3. Return to our communities or places of origin in complete freedom and constitutional rights.
4. Regain our lands and join the productive life of our Country.

5. Rescue our ethnic, cultural and religious identity and make others respect it.
6. Defend our rights as Human Beings and make others respect them.
7. Gain the humanitarian support of solidary institutions for the displaced.
8. Achieve suitable living standards as Guatemalans and Human Beings.

WE INVITE ALL DISPLACED PERSONS IN GUATEMALA TO JOIN US IN THE CONDEG, ON THE ROAD THAT SHOULD BRING US THE SOLUTIONS TO ALL OUR PROBLEMS.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF DISPLACED PERSONS OF GUATEMALA CONDEG

In Guatemala City, on the 3rd day of September 1989, in the see of the National Reconciliation Commission, representatives of the displaced from the different departments, counties and capital city of the Country, as well as distinguished guests, among which were representatives of CONFREGUA, the embassies of France and Sweden, the Human Rights Commission, the Bishop of Jalapa and the Conference of Protestant Churches of Guatemala, among others; with the objective to form our organization **THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF DISPLACED PERSONS OF GUATEMALA - CONDEG -**.

**To the people of Guatemala and
the International Community.**

In our Country only our sacrifices have kept us together as brethren without any help from the authorities we remain in an abandoned state, we have to look after ourselves and are surviving in the country's coasts and cities.