

On April 4, 1990, the Geneva Agreement was signed, and specifically stated that the purpose of the negotiation process was to "end the armed conflict by political means as speedily as possible, promote democratization of the country, guarantee unrestricted respect for human rights and reunify Salvadoran society." (Fishel, 1998: 45)

The first round of full-fledged talks, held in Caracas in May 1990, set the agenda and a tentative timetable. Phase one addressed human rights violations, the Salvadoran armed forces, electoral systems, constitutional and socio-economic reforms, cease-fire, and the role of the UN in verification. Phase two dealt with cease-fire. Once in effect, the negotiations on the implementation of political agreements followed. (Fishel, 1998:45)

Round two in June 1990 focused on human rights abuse and armed forces. The FMLN wanted the death squads disbanded, a single police force under civilian control, penalties against the military implicated in human rights violations, and the creation of commission of truth. (Hampson, 1996:138)

During the third round in San José, Costa Rica, human rights issues were discussed. Both sides agreed to a UN proposal in which they pledged to respect human and civic rights, and to allow the establishment of a UN human rights monitoring mission for one year. It would have the authority to investigate freely the human rights violations, make recommendations, and report to the Secretary General. (Hampson, 1996:138)

In the fourth round of talks in mid-August, both sides agreed simultaneously to disband the Salvadoran armed forces (FAES) and the FMLN army. Specific details of the dissolution were outlined in the final peace accord.

On September 19, all the political parties (including the three left-wing parties) signed an electoral agreement in El Salvador. It revised the electoral rules governing subsequent municipal and legislative elections, and increased the number of seats in the legislative assembly from sixty to eighty-four. (Hampson, 1996:139)

In December 1990, the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) was established to verify the peace agreement negotiated by the parties. Both parties requested the establishment of ONUSAL prior to cease-fire, to reduce the occurrences of violence and human rights abuse. The decision to deploy a human rights observer mission before a cease-fire went into effect was an exceptional occurrence, which had a significant impact on reducing violence and instilling confidence in the peace process. (Hampson, 1996:141)

On April 27, 1991, a partial agreement was signed in Mexico City. This agreement addressed constitutional reforms, subordinated armed forces to civilian authority, removed armed forces' autonomous role in defending constitutional legal order, established the National Civil Police (PMNC) and state intelligence agency (which would be independent from the armed forces), reorganized the Supreme Court of Justice, established new procedures for election of Supreme Court justices, created a commission of truth, and so on. (Hampson, 1996:140)