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## REFUGEES FROM EL SALVADOR ADMITTED

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Special measures to assist persons in Canada affected by the present strife in El Salvador were announced on March 19 by Canadian Employment and Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy.

- Salvadorans who are legal visitors in Canada and have relatives here able to sponsor them as immigrants will be given the opportunity to be landed as permanent residents provided they meet health and security requirements.
- Legal visitors from El Salvador without relatives here, who wish to stay in Canada permanently, will be issued Minister's Permits and authorization to obtain employment. After six months these cases will be reviewed; if it appears the applicants can become successfully established here, they will then be landed as permanent residents provided they meet the statutory requirements.

- Canadians and permanent residents of this country with relatives who have been forced to flee El Salvador will be able to assist their family members to come to Canada under relaxed criteria, provided the individuals living in Canada are able to provide satisfactory settlement arrangements.
- Salvadorans legally in Canada as visitors who wish to stay until the situation in their country is resolved can do so by applying at a Canadian Immigration Centre to have their visitor status extended. Those needing to work during this extended period will be provided with the legal authority to do so.

Mr Axworthy said that these steps are in keeping with the recognized need to closely monitor the situation in El Salvador and to continue to respond to the humanitarian aspects of the problem in an

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## PROPOSAL FOR A SPECIAL CENTRA

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*Following an evaluation team's visit to Central America, the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America and the Comité Crétien pour les Droits de l'Homme en Amérique Latine have submitted to the Department of Employment and Immigration a proposal for further measures to assist refugees from El Salvador. Following are excerpts from this report.*

### BACKGROUND

The situation of violence and repression in Central America, particularly acute over the past year, has forced over one hundred thousand refugees to cross borders and seek protection in neighbouring countries. These refugees are principally from El Salvador and to a lesser extent from Guatemala, and are found in relatively large numbers in Mexico, Belize, Honduras and Costa Rica. Smaller numbers are found in the other countries of the region.

In Belize and Honduras the majority of the refugees are of peasant "campesino" origin, and are being sustained through a system of support by UNHCR and voluntary agencies. For these refugees, all persons involved agree that resettlement outside the area would be inappropriate. Life is difficult for these refugees, and continuing emergency assistance and small economic self-help development projects are an appropriate and very necessary response from the world community.

In Costa Rica and Mexico, however, the situation is different. Here, there are among the refugees many educated and semi-skilled workers, students, teachers (who have been particularly singled out as a class) and others who need to be helped to establish themselves in productive ways. In Costa Rica, the refugees are permitted to enter and are given U.N. recognition and protection from deportation. They are, however, prohibited from working or taking professional training courses and are forced to survive on the limited U.N. allowance or accept illegal employment which could jeopardize their refugee status. Until March 3, 1981 when the U.S. signed a covenant agreement with the Mexico government, things were even worse in Mexico. Refugees were neither recognized nor permitted to work, although limited assistance was provided by the U.N. working through the Red Cross. Happily, the new agreement will remedy the recognition problem and regularize the emergency assistance programmes, but it is generally expected that the final position of the refugee in Mexico will be similar to the present situation in Costa Rica.

In Canada, there is a relatively small Central American population. Most of these have relatives, family, close friends or former work associates who are suffering persecution at present and need to leave their countries. Some have links to people already in the refugee population of Mexico and Costa Rica. Those with family who qualify for "family class" sponsorships now receive priority processing from the Mexican Office of Canada Immigration. Many others, however, do not qualify

## TO CANADA

appropriate way.

"The UNHCR is of the view that it will be possible to repatriate most of the people who have fled El Salvador once the fighting there can be stopped," Mr Axworthy said. "Therefore, the UNHCR is advising all countries that special refugee resettlement programmes are not needed at this time. We accept this view. However, there are some individuals who may not be able to return to their country because they have specific reasons to fear persecution. We are willing to receive refugee applications from individuals in this situation at our offices in the area."

Under existing immigration law, private groups also have the right to sponsor individual refugees from any part of the world.



LA VIRTUD, HONDURAS  
PHOTO: FATHER GREG CHISHOLM

## L AMERICAN REFUGEE PROGRAMME



for that programme nor for the assisted relative programme, since often the Central American relative or friend in Canada does not have sufficient economic strength to qualify or the link is not a sufficiently close relationship. These latter are very concerned and anxious to offer whatever support they can to their friends and relatives from Central America.

Also in Canada there are people who are prepared

to assist Central American refugees. Many of these are from the Christian community where the open persecution of the Church in Central America has evoked a strong desire to respond in whatever ways possible. Most of the churches are involved through their emergency service and development programmes with assistance in the area — but there are parishes that are prepared to make use of the refugee sponsorship programme if an adequate mechanism can be found.

### THE PROPOSAL

That a modest special programme of refugee resettlement take place from the Central American region consisting of resettlement opportunities for at least five hundred government-sponsored refugees from Guatemala and El Salvador. This figure would be over and above the existing Latin American programme for 1,000 in 1981.

That entrance into the government programme be through the existence of a Canadian link. A Canadian link would be either a Canadian resident with a pre-identified relationship to a refugee relative or a friend who is willing to act in a "friendship family" support relationship to the refugee for resettlement purposes.

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That a modest special programme of refugee resettlement take place from the Central American region consisting of resettlement opportunities for at least 500 privately sponsored refugees from Guatemala and El Salvador . . . . . specifically identified by church agencies in the Central American region.

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