

No. 8775

**EMERGENCY RESOLUTION
CONCERNING THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF SALVADORAN REFUGEES**

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

The over 10,000 Salvadoran refugees currently residing in Mesa Grande refugee camp in Honduras have expressed their desire to repopulate their homes of origin in El Salvador and have appealed for spiritual, moral, political and financial support.

The refugees of Mesa Grande have suffered over seven years of persecution, forced exodus, and separation from their homes and land—a forced exodus which began on May 14, 1980, when over 600 members of their families fleeing scorched-earth military operations in El Salvador were massacred by the Salvadoran army as they tried to cross the Sumpul River and enter Honduras.

The refugees who survived and subsequent refugees were forced to relocate to Mesa Grande, Honduras, a camp originally built for 2,000 refugees where over 10,000 Salvadoran refugees currently reside.

The camp is heavily patrolled by Honduran troops who seriously restrict the refugees' movement and harass them when they try to work.

The camp as well as Honduran society has been further militarized by the continuous, massive U.S.-Honduran joint military exercises which cast greater fear and uncertainty within the refugee community of Mesa Grande.

The refugees of Mesa Grande have expressed their anguish that "many of our children have been born inside the camp and do not know freedom."

Over half of the refugee families in Mesa Grande — over 5,000 people — have declared "WE DON'T WANT TO BE REFUGEES ANY LONGER. LET US WORK AND BECOME A PRODUCTIVE FORCE AGAIN. LET US LIVE IN PEACE IN THE LANDS WE KNOW AND LOVE," and have determined to return to their "promised land."

The Salvadoran government of President Napoleon Duarte and the Salvadoran Armed Forces have consistently employed a counterinsurgency program which: 1) aims to depopulate civilian communities (e.g., Operation Phoenix, January-March 1986); and 2) to control civilian populations through a pacification program — "United for Reconstruction" — which has been summarily rejected by the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant Churches in El Salvador.

The Salvadoran government of President Napoleon Duarte and the Salvadoran Armed Forces continue to cut off food and medical supplies, to destroy crops and to capture civilians from populations and refugee resettlements.

The 1949 Geneva Convention and its 1977 Protocols — both of which were signed by El Salvador and which govern the mode of conduct in situations of armed conflicts — expressly defend the right of civilians to live in their places of origin and to hold whatever political opinions they choose free from acts or threats of violence conducted to instill terror in the population.

The Convention further prohibits the military tactic of starving civilian populations or destroying their food stuffs, livestock or anything else necessary for their survival.

The refugees of Mesa Grande and their 750,000 displaced sisters and brothers in El Salvador have told us they derive great strength and hope from their Christian faith, from the words of Amos — "They shall rebuild and inhabit their ruined cities and plant vineyards and drink the wines" (Amos 9:14-15), and from their trust in the religious community of the United States who they have asked:

- 1) to accompany them in the spirit of Archbishop Romero and the four slain U.S. missionary women who dedicated their lives to the refugees and the poor; and
- 2) to provide emergency economic assistance for their journey home.

The refugees and displaced have asked us to support their platform in which they demand that the Duarte Administration and the Salvadoran Armed Forces:

- 1) uphold their right to repatriate to El Salvador and to repopulate and work freely in their places of origin;
- 2) cease the coerced participation of civilian communities in the government counterinsurgency project, "United for Reconstruction" and call for no military posts or civil defense units, stop forced recruitment and military occupations of these communities;
- 3) stop the bombings and destruction of homes, land and crops. Halt the captures and harassment of refugee and displaced communities;
- 4) respect the freedom of movement and trade in and out of these communities and allow free passage of medicine, food and supplies;
- 5) allow national and international humanitarian organizations to aid and work freely in these communities;

WHEREAS the representatives of the interfaith community came together in the United States on July 8, 1987 to form the National Interfaith Campaign in Solidarity with the Refugees of Mesa Grande in their Going Home to generate support for the refugees of Mesa Grande and have asked for religious organizations' sponsorship.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, October 16-21, 1987, expresses our love and support for the refugees of Mesa Grande and all Salvadoran refugees and displaced in their journey home and in so doing affirms the National Interfaith Campaign in Solidarity with the Salvadoran Refugees of Mesa Grande;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that our international office on human rights seek to identify and promote concrete ways in which our membership and organizations can render moral and political support to the refugees of Mesa Grande in their journey home, including accompaniment on their journeys;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that individuals urge their congressional representatives to exercise responsible decision-making and exert their influence on the Administration of Salvadoran President Napoleon Duarte and the Salvadoran Armed Forces to guarantee respect for human rights of refugees in the Going Home Program which began October 11, 1987.