

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOE MOAKLEY  
ON BEHALF OF  
THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION  
CAMINO REAL HOTEL  
SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR  
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Shortly after the heinous murders of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her young daughter on November 16, 1989, Speaker Tom Foley appointed a special task force to monitor the Salvadoran Government's investigation into the murders and to report back to him. The Republican Leader in the Congress, Robert Michel, appointed 5 Republican Members led by Congressman Bud Shuster to join the task force on its visit to El Salvador.

We have just completed an intensive 4 day visit to this country. During our stay we have been briefed extensively by our Ambassador and his staff and by the Special Investigative Unit (SIU) which has conducted the investigation into the murders. We have met with President Cristiani, with Army Chief of Staff, Colonel Ponce; Vice Minister of Defense, Colonel Zepeda; with the Jesuit provincial for Central America, Father Tojiera, the Jesuit rector of UCA, Father Estrada; with Archbishop Rivera y Damas; the Attorney General; the Judge handling the case; with other religious defense lawyers and captured FMLN fighters.

All the members of this delegation would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Salvadoran Government, the U.S. Embassy and a special thanks to the Society of Jesus, who have shared with us both their pain and wisdom.

Our focus in the meetings has been fourfold:

1. To determine whether the investigation has led to the identification of all those responsible for the murders.
2. To ascertain whether it is likely that they will be brought to justice.

3. To gauge the overall climate of respect for human rights in El Salvador.
4. To assess the prospects for an end to the war and a lasting peace.

With respect to the investigation, we believe that it has been characterized by good police work on the part of the SIU and we commend the Salvadoran Government for this. The technical aspects in this case have been handled well.

We believe, however, that the investigation is not over and that important leads and allegations remain to be fully investigated -- namely reports which suggest that the intellectual authors of the murders may not have been identified and suggestions that there may have been a cover-up of this crime by some in the armed forces. We note in this connection that Colonel Ponce told us that not one person in the military -- not one -- came forward to report to him the complicity of the Army in the murders. We, therefore, join with our Ambassador in insisting that these specific allegations must be thoroughly investigated.

With respect to the next phase of the judicial process, we fear that presently available evidence may be insufficient to bring all the murderers to justice. We are deeply concerned about this prospect -- and strongly support current as well as possible new efforts by the United States to assist in every possible way the Salvadoran Government in its investigatory and judicial efforts.

With respect to the overall climate of respect for human rights, we have strong concerns. First, we condemn -- in the strongest possible terms -- the FMLN offensive and the needless bloodshed which resulted. In prosecuting the offensive, the FMLN is guilty of serious violations of human rights and caused a serious setback to the prospects for a peaceful settlement to the war.

With regard to the Salvadoran armed forces -- a central question for the task force is whether the human rights problems in El Salvador -- including the

Jesuit killings -- are the actions of a few renegade military figures or whether, in fact, they stem from attitudes and actions that go to the very heart of the armed forces and other major institutions in this country. Encouraging genuine change in these institutions remains the greatest challenge facing El Salvador; a challenge that despite enormous investments of money and effort, has not yet been fully met. Given the tragedy of the Jesuit case, it is particularly important that the armed forces be able to distinguish as an institution between those who take up arms against the Government and those whose religious and political convictions simply place them at odds with the Government.

Lastly, with respect to the prospects for peace, we believe that the way to end the fighting is through negotiations. Both here in El Salvador and in the United States, the Congress is being urged by some to end military aid to El Salvador or condition aid on peace negotiations between the Salvadoran Government and the FMLN. We strongly urge the opening of honest dialogue that can lead to an end to the fighting and to peace with freedom and justice for all Salvadorans.