



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

June 2, 1983

Dear Colleague:

On April 28 we, along with 86 other members of Congress, sent a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz and Attorney General William French Smith asking that they adopt a policy of Extended Voluntary Departure Status for Salvadoran refugees.

Extended Voluntary Departure Status is not a grant of asylum or any type of immigration status. It is a temporary stay of deportation issued in recognition of "compelling humanitarian factors" such as civil war or other dangers which threaten the safety of persons who return to their homeland. The State Department has previously issued Extended Voluntary Departure to displaced persons from Poland, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan.

In a Guidance Statement released to the press yesterday, the State Department reiterated its opposition to Extended Voluntary Departure for Salvadoran refugees. The statement did not touch on conditions within El Salvador, but forwarded the proposition that Extended Voluntary Departure would encourage illegal immigration, and, further, that Salvadorans pass through other countries where they can take refuge before entering the United States.

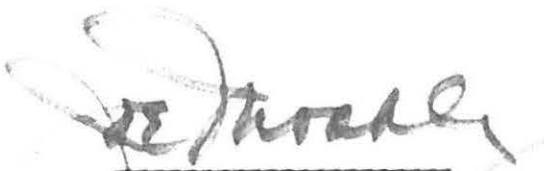
The vast majority of Salvadoran refugees are not economic aliens, but persons who have been displaced by violence. It is no easy journey to the United States, and there is no reason to believe that allowing Extended Voluntary Departure will make that journey easier, or encourage more people to take it. To suggest that Salvadorans seek shelter in the already overcrowded refugee camps expanding throughout Central America is an abdication of our responsibility to those refugees presently in the United States.

We believe that expressing concern about this humanitarian issue does not have to be construed as criticism of the Administration policy in Central America. Whatever our policy there, we must not shirk our responsibility for those individuals seeking temporary shelter in the United States.

We would like to encourage those of you who are concerned about this issue to write the members of the Administration listed on the back of this letter, expressing your concern, and your hope that the Administration will grant Extended Voluntary Departure to Salvadoran refugees.

With warm regards,

Sincerely,



JOE MOAKLEY



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## Why Poles but Not Salvadorans?

This is a story about a case of bureaucratic doubletalk, which is harmless, and a double standard, which is not. The doubletalk is "extended voluntary departure," which means giving visitors to this country a port in a sudden storm. The double standard is that the United States gives such refuge to people from most of the world, but not to people from El Salvador. Why not?

There are refugees and there are refugees. Some come here precisely to find a permanent haven from persecution — Jews fleeing Hitler in the 30's, boat people fleeing Vietnam in the 70's. But others come here as visitors and are turned into refugees, while here, by events at home. To force them to return before the turmoil ends might be a death sentence.

The Ugandans, for example, who were here during Idi Amin's bloody last days ... or the Iranian students in colleges across the country when the Ayatollah came to power ... or the Poles visiting in this country when martial law was declared in theirs ... or, now, the Salvadorans.

Some societies provide for temporary safe haven by law. American law makes no such provision but this country has evolved an informal one, under the Attorney General's prosecutory discretion — extended voluntary departure. That means if you are in a class of people found to need temporary haven in an emergency, you can stay. Even if your visa expires tomorrow morning, you have an extra six months, say, to wait out the storm back home, maybe longer.

For instance, if you are a Pole who was caught here when martial law was declared in your homeland in December 1981, your extended voluntary departure deadline is about to be extended yet

again, to December 1983. Over the years, the Government has granted this kind of haven to other nationalities, too — Cubans, Czechs, Chileans, Ethiopians, Nicaraguans, Ugandans and Afghans. Why does this Administration refuse to grant such safe haven to Salvadorans?

One explanation concerns danger. State Department officials contend that the violence in El Salvador is not sufficiently intense or widespread to justify extended voluntary departure. It's a puzzling argument, coming just at the time the Administration wants Congress to spend much more to help end the Salvadoran violence.

It would appear to be precisely in our foreign policy interest to *affirm* that conditions in El Salvador are dangerous, not to deny it. Nor would acknowledging the violence disparage the Government that the United States wishes to assist.

A second, more plausible explanation is numbers. There are only about 5,000 Poles affected by extended voluntary departure but probably 100,000 Salvadorans — or more. Not many Poles are able to sneak into this country to take advantage of the grant of temporary haven. But officials fear that a great many Salvadorans would try sneaking in if they became eligible for it, turning it into a de facto amnesty for illegals.

Perhaps so, but what does that have to do with peril? If El Salvador is dangerous, as the State Department reports in other contexts, then forcing Salvadorans to return home may subject them to danger and death. Why does the Reagan Administration err on the side of peril? Why not, temporarily, err on the side of safety? Why let Poles stay but not Salvadorans?

Fairness, not to mention humanity, calls for a better answer.

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