

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOE MOAKLEY
BEFORE A MEETING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON RULES OF THE HOUSE
ON H.R. 618 AND H.R. 1409

THIS MORNING THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON RULES OF THE HOUSE WILL CONSIDER H.R. 618 AND H.R. 1409, LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD TEMPORARILY SUSPEND THE DEPORTATIONS OF SALVADORAN AND NICARAGUAN REFUGEES CURRENTLY IN THIS COUNTRY, WHILE THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE CONDUCTS AN INVESTIGATION OF CONDITIONS IN THESE TWO COUNTRIES.

FOR FOUR LONG YEARS, I HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING THAT EXTENDED VOLUNTARY DEPARTURE BE GRANTED TO SALVADORANS IN THE UNITED STATES. AND, MORE RECENTLY, WE HAVE ADDED NICARAGUANS TO OUR EFFORT DUE, IN LARGE PART, TO THE FORCEFUL AND ELOQUENT MANNER IN WHICH THE DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN OF THE RULES COMMITTEE, CLAUDE PEPPER, HAS PRESENTED THEIR CASE.

IT IS THE WARS IN EL SALVADOR AND NICARAGUA THAT HAVE PROMPTED ME AND OVER 140 OTHER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO PUSH FOR A TEMPORARY STAY OF DEPORTATION FOR THESE REFUGEES. AND IT IS ALSO A SENSE OF CONSISTENCY AND FAIRNESS THAT HAS FORCED THIS LEGISLATION.

IN THE PAST 27 YEARS, EXTENDED VOLUNTARY DEPARTURE HAS BEEN GRANTED 15 DIFFERENT TIMES TO NATIONALS FROM COUNTRIES COMPARABLE TO EL SALVADOR AND NICARAGUA. IN FACT, THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS EITHER GRANTED OR EXTENDED EVD TO POLES, AFGHANS, ETHIOPIANS AND UGANDANS. WHY ARE WE NOW DRAGGING OUR FEET WHEN IT COMES TO SALVADORANS AND NICARAGUANS?

RECENTLY, SALVADORAN PRESIDENT DUARTE SENT A LETTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN ASKING FOR EVD FOR SALVADORANS. I WELCOME THAT LETTER--AND SINCERELY HOPE THAT IT WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION TO AGREE TO THE PROVISIONS OF MY LEGISLATION.

HOWEVER, IN ALL CANDOR, I MUST PERSONALLY DISAGREE WITH THE RATIONALE OF PRESIDENT DUARTE'S LETTER. PRESIDENT DUARTE BASES HIS REQUEST MOSTLY ON ECONOMIC MATTERS AND I BELIEVE SUCH AN EXPLANATION IGNORES THE COMPLEXITY AND THE HEART OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR. WHILE IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF EL SALVADOR IS DISASTROUS -- ONE CANNOT SEPARATE THAT FACT FROM THE WAR AND ALL THE HORRORS ASSOCIATED WITH THAT WAR.

I WANT TO MAKE CLEAR THAT IT IS NOT THE INTENTION OF THE SPONSORS OF THIS LEGISLATION TO FIND SOME BACK DOOR APPROACH TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL AID EL SALVADOR RECEIVES FROM THE UNITED STATES. AS THE NEW YORK TIMES RECENTLY STATED , "REFUGEES ARE NOT SUBSIDIES"-- AND I WHOLEHEARTEDLY AGREE. SALVADORANS MAY SEND MONEY HOME, BUT THAT, IN ITSELF, IS NOT A PROPER REASON TO SUSPEND DEPORTATIONS. THIS BILL WAS INTRODUCED AS A PROTECTION MEASURE IN RESPONSE TO THE GENERAL CONDITIONS OF VIOLENCE AND CIVIL UNREST IN EL SALVADOR. IF I BECAME CONVINCED THAT THIS LEGISLATION WAS MERELY A GLORIFIED APPROPRIATIONS BILL-- AND UNNECESSARY FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE -- THEN I WOULD VOTE AGAINST IT.

I SAY THIS NOT TO BLAME THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT FOR ALL THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WAR. I AM EQUALLY DISTRESSED BY THE REPORTS OF GUERRILLA ATROCITIES IN THAT WAR-RAVAGED COUNTRY. BUT THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT, DESPITE WHAT I BELIEVE ARE GENUINE AND SINCERE INTENTIONS BY PRESIDENT DUARTE TO BETTER THE SITUATION, MUST STILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME VERY SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

I BELIEVE VERY STRONGLY THAT THE LEGISLATION WE ARE DISCUSSING TODAY IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER. I AM SOMEWHAT ASHAMED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS HAS TAKEN SO LONG TO ACT ON THIS ISSUE OF PROTECTION FOR SALVADORANS AND NICARAGUANS. I AM HOPING THAT WITHIN THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS THIS WILL CHANGE.