

## DRAFT

### NATIONAL AGENDA DOCUMENT

#### Introduction

The United States needs a new policy toward El Salvador.

During the last ten years, the United States has given El Salvador a total of more than four and a half billion dollars. The U.S. has provided financial, political and diplomatic support to the Salvadoran government, and has provided military training and more than a billion dollars in direct military assistance to the Salvadoran Armed Forces. The avowed purpose has been to support democracy and human rights, encourage social and economic reforms, and defeat the opposition Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

In every aspect, this policy has been a failure.

The political party currently in power -- the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) -- espouses extremist political and economic positions. It opposes even those minimal reforms supported by previous Salvadoran administrations and by the United States. It includes in its senior leadership individuals widely believed to support and control paramilitary death squads, who operate extralegally against opponents of the government. The best known of these is the infamous Roberto D'Aubuisson. D'Aubuisson was denied admission to the United States for many years because he was suspected of having plotted to kill the U.S. Ambassador. In addition, he is generally considered the intellectual author of the killing of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

The military we have funded continues to operate without any effective institutional constraints. Independent observers hold the Armed Forces responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths in the country, either through indiscriminate bombing, or through the shooting of unarmed civilians considered to sympathize with the opposition. Despite this, no military officer has ever been convicted of a human rights violation. In fact, just as negotiations between the government and the FMLN are beginning, military attacks against civilian communities, against religious activists, against labor leaders, and others have increased in the last few months. The military continues to act with impunity, because neither the military nor the civil judicial system is willing or able to bring to justice military officers who commit human rights violations.

The military continues to act as the dominant political power in society, exercising veto power over actions by the civilian government. While elections have been held at regular intervals, the governments thus elected have not been able to act

independently of, nor assert their authority over, the Armed Forces.

The military has become an independent economic power in society, through widespread corruption and the misuse of U.S. aid. The retirement fund controlled by the Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Social Provision Institute (IPSFA), has become the largest, and most financially solvent, source of capital in the country. Senior military officers have investments in real estate, fishing, banking, and commercial enterprises. They have exploited their position so that privileged senior officers constitute one of the most powerful groups in society.

The military has grown as a power in society, with its numbers growing, with U.S. funding, from 12,000 soldiers in 1980 to 60,000 soldiers in 1990. Despite this, it has not successfully prosecuted the war. The Salvadoran military has been ineffective in combatting the guerrillas of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. Last November, the FMLN launched an offensive which rocked San Salvador, and demonstrated that they are a major military force in the country. In Congressional testimony in February of 1990, the chief of the U.S. Southern Command, General Maxwell Thurman, admitted that the FMLN was unlikely to be defeated in the foreseeable future.

In sum, the United States policy toward El Salvador has failed on every major front, political, military, and socio-economic. A new policy is needed.

### The Reasons for a new Policy

The United States needs a new policy toward El Salvador not only because the current policy has failed, and the Armed Forces funded with U.S. dollars have become a major problem. The United States needs a new policy because the current one has been disastrous for the Salvadoran people, and has not served the interests of the people of the United States.

#### **U.S. policy has been disastrous for the people of El Salvador.**

More than 70,000 have died in the ten years of conflict in El Salvador, and more than a million have been displaced.

The human rights of the Salvadoran people are violated in an ongoing and systematic way. Trade unionists, religious activists, and community organizers who speak out for, and work for their rights continue to be persecuted, continue to disappear, continue to be arrested, tortured, sometimes killed.

The Salvadoran Armed Forces have become a power unto themselves, accountable to no one. The money provided by the United States over the last ten years has enabled the military to establish itself as an independent power in society, acting with impunity against those who displease them.

U.S. aid to El Salvador has worked to keep the war going, but not to aid the Salvadoran people. The Salvadoran economy has stalled, and agrarian reform has been halted.

More than a million Salvadorans have fled the country because of the war, and government repression. Hundreds of thousands of them have come to the United States, seeking shelter and security. They have faced discrimination and harassment, and the threat of arrest and deportation.

U.S. policy has been a moral and political disaster for the people of El Salvador, and a disgrace for the American people.

**U.S. policy has not functioned in the long-term interest of the United States.**

The United States has spent ten years trying to keep the FMLN out of power in El Salvador, arguing that the rebels threatened U.S. security interests in the region. With the cooling of Cold War tensions, it is now clearer than ever that there is no threat from El Salvador to U.S. interests. Neither U.S. borders, nor U.S. economic interests, are threatened by developments in El Salvador.

In fact, U.S. policy itself has had negative consequences for hemispheric security. The war in El Salvador has destabilized the country and the region. It has required millions of dollars to prop up the economy, and it has created refugee problems in Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Mexico. It has also required political and diplomatic attention which could better be devoted to solving other and more threatening regional problems, including the continuing debt crisis and the drug economy.

U.S. strategy in El Salvador has supported investment and economic development strategies which benefit neither the Salvadoran nor the North American people. Suppressing wages and limiting trade union activities has not encouraged the development of an internal market or domestic demand in El Salvador, and has encouraged the export of U.S. jobs.

Finally, at a time when the United States needs to confront its own internal problems -- rebuilding our economy, reducing our staggering national debt, addressing the problems of racial polarization and increasing poverty --, we cannot afford either the political energy or the financial costs of the war in El Salvador.

Both the moral failures of U.S. policy, and its negative consequences for the United States, have generated widespread opposition in the United States. Churches and synagogues, labor groups, Hispanic organizations, disarmament and development organizations, peace and justice groups, refugee rights advocates, and others, have challenged U.S. intervention in El Salvador and called for an end to war related aid to the Salvadoran government. Those groups are calling for a new U.S. policy for El Salvador.

### The Moment for a New Policy

This is an auspicious moment to develop a new U.S. policy toward El Salvador.

Among policy makers, there is a new willingness to reconsider U.S. policy toward El Salvador. U.S. policy is in a period of flux, in response to the failure of the strategy of winning the war militarily and isolating the FMLN. The Congress is dissatisfied -- in May, a decisive majority in the House of Representatives voted to withhold 50% of U.S. military aid to El Salvador -- , and is pushing the Administration to move quickly toward redefining its El Salvador policy. But while there is a general recognition that a new policy is needed, there is no consensus on what the outlines of that policy should be.

Developments in the international arena encourage a reconsideration of U.S. policy. The cooling of international tensions has allowed regional conflicts to be addressed more on their own merits, outside the Cold War framework. As a result, there has been increased interest in promoting negotiated solutions to many of these conflicts. There are examples in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and South Africa of dialogue and negotiations opening the way to peaceful resolutions to deeply-rooted conflicts. There have been reductions in the level of military support provided to belligerents in Cambodia, Ethiopia, and other countries. This new international climate offers an opportunity to promote a negotiated end to the conflict in El Salvador.

In El Salvador, sentiment for a negotiated end to the war has grown dramatically. Trade unions across the political spectrum have united in a call for a negotiated end to the war. The Catholic Church has called for good faith talks. The Christian Democratic Party and the opposition Democratic Convergence have signed joint documents in support of a political solution. This has generated substantial political pressure for progress in negotiations.

In forums, public announcements, and open letters, Salvadorans from across the political spectrum have begun to articulate their goals for the negotiations process. The negotiations need to address not only an end to the fighting, but also the issues of

democratization, demilitarization, and the economic development of the country.

In response to these factors, negotiations have actually begun in El Salvador. With the active participation of the UN Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, the two sides in the conflict agreed in Geneva, on April 4th, to proceed with direct talks toward political agreements and a ceasefire in the war. Thus, the changed situation in El Salvador both offers the U.S. an opportunity to reformulate its policy, and challenges us to support, in the negotiations process, the outcomes of democracy, demilitarization, and development.

### **Achieving Democracy, Stability, Justice and Peace**

A new U.S. policy toward El Salvador ought to seek an end to the armed conflict through negotiations. What follows articulates three objectives which ought to guide U.S. policy toward El Salvador as the parties address the substantive issues in the negotiating process. These objectives will contribute to achieving democracy, stability, justice, and peace. They embody the values and priorities of the people of the United States, as well as reflecting the call of the people of El Salvador.

#### **I. The Institutionalization of Democratic Rights**

##### **A. Human and Civil Rights.**

Human rights and democratic freedom include freedom of expression, freedom of association, religious freedom, freedom of political opinion, and freedom from discrimination. In the United States, these rights have been enshrined in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights for 200 years. In a country with the history of El Salvador, these rights need to be guaranteed in an institutional way, including constitutional guarantees, independent investigative and review bodies to consider complaints, the establishment of a functioning judicial system, etc.

##### **B. Democratic political rights.**

A democratic government is a universally recognized human right. Democratically elected governments reflect the will of the majority while protecting minority rights. They are chosen through electoral procedures which guarantee widespread participation, and ensure that all who wish to can participate without fear or intimidation. Democratic political rights include the right to organize politically, and to express political opinions

individually and collectively. In the context of El Salvador, substantial revisions in the registration process and in the electoral code will be required, security guarantees will be necessary, and international observers needed in order to carry out genuinely free and fair elections.

### **C. Social and economic rights.**

In a pluralistic political and economic system, individuals, organizations, and interest groups all have political and economic rights. Workers, peasants, and cooperatives, along with businesses, have the right to organize themselves and work for their own economic and political interests. Social and political groups, neighborhood and community organizations, have the right to organize and press for services from the government. The society needs to guarantee the rights of all to pursue their economic and social interests.

In El Salvador, trade union rights need to be guaranteed, and the labor code revised to protect them. The government needs to actively encourage employers to bargain in good faith with workers who exercise their rights. Systems need to be devised to protect the rights and freedoms of organized community groups and to permit them to provide input to the local and national governments.

## **II. The Demilitarization of Society.**

The democratic rights of the Salvadoran people cannot be institutionalized until the problem of the Armed Forces is confronted and overcome. As long as the military can violate the rights of citizens with impunity, those rights have not been institutionally protected. Because the size and the power of the military are in large measure a result of ten years of U.S. funding, the United States bears a special responsibility for helping to resolve this problem.

Given the years of war, and the experience of rightist and military violence, Salvadoran society needs to be demilitarized. The Army needs to be constitutionally and actually subject to civilian control. The Armed Forces need to be cleansed of those with death squad connections.

The military needs to be substantially reduced in size, with the eventual goal of demilitarizing the society by dismantling completely both the Armed Forces and the rebel military structure. New military training

should be eliminated, and the military academy closed. In the long term, progressive reductions in the size of the military forces of both parties ought to lead to a society without a military.

As reductions in military forces take place, soldiers and officers ought to be given training and assistance to enable them to return to civilian life.

### **III. The Reconstruction and Economic Development of the society.**

Given the devastation of the country by the U.S.-funded war, the United States should take a special responsibility for economic reconstruction and development.

Once the military conflict has ended, and the processes of democratization and demilitarization are underway, El Salvador, will need to develop its economy and improve the national standard of living. It will not be able to resolve the underlying causes of the war unless it does so. This will obviously require international assistance and investment, as well as internal economic planning. The United States should play a role in providing such development assistance. This aid should be oriented toward the poorest sectors of society, and linked to continued progress in democratization and demilitarization. In addition, the United States should play a role in encouraging international and multilateral development aid.

These three broad objectives can be achieved through the process of negotiations now underway in El Salvador. Because of the role that U.S. assistance has played in El Salvador in the last ten years, the suspension of war-related aid to the Salvadoran government would substantially impact the negotiations process and advance these broad objectives.

#### **Immediate Steps for El Salvador Policy**

In order to achieve the objectives listed above--the institutionalization of democratic rights, the demilitarization of society, and economic development and reconstruction--the United States should implement the following immediate steps:

- 1) support a political resolution to the conflict in El Salvador by:

- a) supporting a negotiated political solution, under the auspices of the UN Secretary General, involving the political parties and social forces in the country along with the government and the FMLN, as envisaged by the Geneva agreements of April, 1990;
  - b) supporting the process of negotiations agreed to in Caracas, in June, 1990, calling for political agreements on the armed forces, human rights, electoral, judicial and constitutional reforms, economic and social issues, and UN verification, leading to an agreement on a ceasefire;
- 2) suspend all US war-related assistance to the government, while permitting assistance for democratization;
  - 3) transform current war-related assistance into development aid. Aid should be funneled through non-governmental organizations, and any aid channeled through the government should be linked to the negotiated end of the armed conflict. Aid should pass through development assistance programs which foster support for the poorest sectors.
  - 4) support development policies and programs, once the war has ended, which help to diversify the economy, reduce dependence on foreign aid, provide for employment, and help meet basic needs (local infrastructure, schools, basic agriculture, etc.). Because of the devastation caused by the war, and the need for reconstruction, these programs should be long-term in character, guaranteeing assistance for five to ten years.
  - 5) foster non-governmental people-to-people links between the US and El Salvador, supporting programs which provide direct humanitarian assistance and develop "sister community" links between the United States and El Salvador;
  - 6) offer "extended voluntary departure" status to Salvadoran refugees in the United States until such time as they can be successfully reintegrated into a democratic society with a functioning economy.