



STATEMENT OF SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

FEBRUARY 10, 1982

TOWARD A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IN EL SALVADOR

Mr. President, I am pleased to join my able colleague from Connecticut as a co-sponsor of this resolution.

The issue in El Salvador is not, as some would have it, a choice between involvement or non-involvement, between joining the fight or running away. That sort of logic belongs to a strictly military approach to the problem. The purpose of our resolution is to communicate to the Administration that there is another option, a better option, which can both end the conflict and serve our interests. That option is a negotiated settlement.

At this particular stage of the war in El Salvador, history is presenting us with a rare opportunity. Most of the key parties in that tragic war want to negotiate an end to the fighting and a political settlement. A number of other nations and groups in Central America and Europe are interested in facilitating such negotiations. This window will not stay open for long, in my opinion. The time to act is now.

There is a precedent for a successful negotiated settlement. Most guerilla wars have ended with a military victory for the guerillas or for the government. In at least one case, however, the war^{was} ended by an all parties peace conference which agreed on a cease-fire and ultimately a political settlement. That case was Zimbabwe in 1980.

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Elections were held under British supervisions and a popularly elected government was installed. Zimbabwe is a practicing democracy. The extremist forces of that guerilla war have been either excluded from power or absorbed by moderate forces. Zimbabwe is not without its problems, but it does stand as a dramatic example of how best to end a long standing, festering guerilla war.

I believe that we should pursue that example. To let this war lurch forward to its sad conclusion will cost thousands of lives and threaten the entire region with instability and conflict. The Administration must seize the opportunity and move forward vigorously toward a negotiated settlement of this war in El Salvador.

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