

November 15, 1985

Honorable Members of Congress  
of the United States of America

Our country, El Salvador, has been living a time of suffering for the past approximately six years. The war is part of the daily life of our population throughout the country, and the profundization of the military conflict offers a future of greater pain, uncertainty and suffering for the grand majority of Salvadorans.

As a result of this war which continues to grow, there are almost a million Salvadorans who are displaced or have become refugees; they wander through different places seeking a refuge that would provide temporary relief from their agony. There are more than a million Salvadoran refugees looking for the shelter under international laws protecting refugees that is mandated by the United Nations. Protected by these laws, a good number of them have found temporary safety in countries such as Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Canada, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

During my visit to your country, the United States, it was with profound concern that I was able to confirm, through numerous testimonies, that the authorities and members of the government of the United States have closed their doors and their hearts against the suffering of my people, unprotected in a foreign land.

During this time of war that El Salvador is living, deportation is an act which is contrary to the law of our Father who asked that we "clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give refuge to the persecuted..." To return the persecuted to the source, the origin, the cause of his suffering is an act of injustice in the eyes of Christian love.

It is in the name of this Christian love, which is the basis of the pastoral and evangelical labors of my Salvadoran Church, and in the name of the international laws expressed in the Refugee Protocols of the United Nations and the Refugee Act of 1980, that I, Archbishop Rivera y Damas, ask each and every one of you, Honorable Members of the House and the Senate of the United States of America, that you open your arms, your hearts, and your Christian charity to my suffering people and that you double your efforts against the deportation of Salvadoran refugees and in support of measures such as the Moakley-DeConcini Bill (H.R. 822, S. 377) which in some way will contribute to a temporary solution to the agony of my flock in search of refuge.

Arturo Rivera y Damas  
Archbishop of San Salvador

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TRANSLATOR'S CERTIFICATE

I, Gretta Siebentritt, certify that the above is a complete and correct translation of the Spanish original and that I am bilingual in English and Spanish and competent to render such translation.

Signed here in Washington D.C. on November 24, 1985.

