



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE ISSUES STATEMENT ON 'SANCTUARY' INDICTMENTS

WASHINGTON--The General Secretary of the United States Catholic Conference deplored the fact that government policies regarding Central America "entangle people of good will in criminal prosecutions."

Msgr. Daniel F. Hoye commented on the recent indictment of 16 people charged with smuggling illegal aliens. They were said to have been involved in the "sanctuary movement" to assist Central American refugees. On the same day (Jan. 14) more than 50 aliens were arrested around the country.

Msgr. Hoye said the actions of the 16 persons, including two priests and three religious women, were based on "humanitarian concerns for the persons displaced by the violence and strife in El Salvador."

The USCC official said a grant of extended voluntary departure to victims of such conditions would be consistent with past actions by the U.S. government and "would largely eliminate

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the source of confrontations between persons pursuing their religiously-based beliefs to help displaced Salvadorans and the government."

Following is the text of his statement:

The United States Catholic Conference regrets that humanitarian efforts in Arizona to assist individuals who have fled the civil strife in their Central American homelands have led to the indictment of sixteen persons for alleged violations of law, and the apprehension of more than 50 individuals seeking refuge in this country. Without prejudging the case, which involves two Roman Catholic priests and three Roman Catholic religious, the Conference deplores the fact that various policy issues concerning the situation in Central America create conditions which evoke humanitarian and religiously-based responses, and entangle people of good faith in criminal prosecutions.

The Administrative Board of USCC, in September 1981, urged that a moratorium be placed on all deportations to El Salvador until such time as the government in power in that country is in a position to give reasonable assurance of the safety of its citizens. In December of 1981, Congress adopted a sense of Congress resolution the thrust of which is that the Administration "should take full account of the civil strife in El Salvador" in making decisions affecting petitions for extended voluntary departure by citizens of that strife torn country. The USCC supported passage of H.R. 4447 (S. 2131), the "Moakley/DeConcini Bill," which would have temporarily suspended the deportation of Salvadorans pending a Presidential study of the living conditions of displaced Salvadorans in that country and neighboring countries, and congressional review of possible steps to improve the conditions described in that study. As recently as this past November, I wrote the President and asked that he and his Administration work to find a solution which would permit Salvadorans and other undocumented individuals to plan for their future and to extend to them temporary protection from deportation pending congressional action to enact more lasting solutions.

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The actions of the sixteen alleged violators are based upon humanitarian concerns for the persons displaced by the violence and strife in El Salvador. The grant of extended voluntary departure to the victims of these conditions would be consistent with past extensions of blanket extended voluntary departure to nationals of other strife torn countries, such as Poland, Uganda and Hungary, and would largely eliminate the source of confrontation between persons pursuing their religiously-based beliefs to help displaced Salvadorans and the Government.

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