



The United Church of Canada General Council

GCE Guatemalan Refugees (1984G762)

True Document Date

March 8, 1984

In response to a letter from Montreal and Ottawa Conference, the Executive passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS the violation of human rights is all too common in many countries throughout the world; and

WHEREAS Guyana and Guatemala in our hemisphere have political and military regimes whose oppression is the cause of thousands attempting to flee their homeland; and

WHEREAS the Canadian government is considering the imposition of visitor visas on Guyana and Guatemala; and

WHEREAS Guyanese and Guatemalans residing in Canada illegally, if deported to their homeland, might have punitive action taken against them, or be marked for torture and/or death; and

WHEREAS the Richelieu Valley pastoral charge of Montreal Presbytery has provided sanctuary to a Guatemalan under threat of deportation in December, 1983; and

WHEREAS the government of Canada has suspended in January 1984, deportations to Guatemala; an

WHEREAS The United Church of Canada has no official policy or position with respect to the activity of the United Church pastoral charges and the use of United Church buildings in offering sanctuary:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Executive of General Council of The United Church of Canada, meeting in Mississauga, March 6-9, 1984:

1. ENDORSE the request of the Moderator to the Minister of State for External Affairs not to impose a visa regulation affecting Guatemalan and Guyanese travel to Canada.
2. ENDORSE the request of the Moderator to urge against any action by the government of Canada to place a tariff on visas beyond that which is general in western countries.
3. ENDORSE the carefully controlled and judicious offer of sanctuary to political refugees and exiles by congregations and pastoral charges with the understanding that such actions can entail legal action by the government of Canada; and that such action should only be taken by congregations in extremes since the primary objective in situations where sanctuary may be called for is a change, at least temporarily, in the right of persons who wish to remain in Canada until it has been competently judged that the risk of violation of their persons and rights is removed.

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