

RESOLUTION NO. 8586-R22

A RESOLUTION
UPHOLDING THE UNITED STATES REFUGEE ACT OF 1980

WHEREAS, the United States supported the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948, which commits the member states to recognize and observe basic human rights; and

WHEREAS, the United States, El Salvador and Guatemala have ratified on August 12, 1949, the Geneva Convention IV, Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in time of war; and

WHEREAS, the United States has acceded to the 1967 United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees which states: "No contracting state shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion"; and

WHEREAS, the United States Refugee Act of 1980 authorizes the grant of asylum to refugees who are defined in terms identical to the United Nations 1967 Convention as any person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social or political opinion, is outside of the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country"; and

WHEREAS, over 40,000 noncombatant civilians are estimated to have been killed in El Salvador since 1979; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans have fled their country seeking refuge and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has granted political asylum to less than three percent of the Salvadorans who have applied; and

WHEREAS, in 1982 and 1983, over 4,800 refugees were returned to El Salvador and a preliminary survey by the Center of Immigrants Rights and the American Civil Liberties Union reports that the names of 50 of those returned have turned up on lists of victims killed by security forces or death squads; and

WHEREAS, many thousands of noncombatant civilians, including peasants, Indians, trade unionists, religious personnel, political leaders, journalists and members of the legal profession have been systematically seized and frequently tortured and murdered by both uniform and plain clothes members of security forces under government control in Guatemala since the early 1970's; and

WHEREAS, the City of Urbana is committed to equal rights irrespective of political beliefs or national origin.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF URBANA, ILLINOIS, as follows:

Section 1. That in respect for international law and human rights, the federal authorities, including the Congress, take action necessary to grant "extended voluntary departure" status, or otherwise temporarily suspend the deportation of the Central American refugees who have fled from persecution in their home countries.

Section 2. That in the event the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service authorities seek to arrest any Central American refugee under the sponsorship of the local sanctuary coalition and deport him/her back to his/her possible death, the Urbana City Council hereby requests that, as a courtesy and decency, the Immigration and Naturalization Service immediately notify the local sanctuary coalition so that it may gather legal and support services as quickly as possible.

Section 3. That copies of this Resolution will be sent to each of our United States Senators and the Illinois Congressional Delegation and the President of the United States to thoroughly investigate the process by which refugees are granted asylum.

1986. PASSED by the City Council this 3rd day of March


Ruth S. Brookens
Ruth S. Brookens, City Clerk

1986. APPROVED by the Mayor this _____ day of _____,

Not signed
Jeffrey T. Markland, Mayor