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Salvadoran Refugees In Panama Demand Repatriation

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 14, about 600 Salvadoran refugees commenced a 150-km. march from Coclesito to Panama City to call attention to their demand that the Salvadoran government facilitate repatriation to Usulután department. Jorge Villatoro, spokesperson for the Oscar Romero Refugee Committee, said President Alfredo Cristiani's government had obstructed their return, scheduled to have taken place the first week in November. He added that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Central America threatened to cut off assistance to the refugees if they carried out the march. The Coclesito refugee community is comprised of Salvadoran peasants who fled to Panama 10 years ago. Panamanian authorities have offered to settle the refugees on the Hacienda El Pichiche, La Paz department. The Oscar Romero community rejected the offer. (Basic data from AFP, 11/14/90)

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