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## **Refugee Advocacy Group Skeptical About Impact On Salvadorans Of New U.S. Immigration Legislation**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Nov. 29, President George Bush signed into law the Immigration Act of 1990. The law includes an amendment granting temporary protection status (TPS) to Salvadorans who came to the US before Sept. 19, 1990, and who have no prior criminal record or communicable disease. The legislation, which goes into effect on Jan. 1, 1991, offers the estimated one million Salvadorans living in the US legal status for 18 months. At the end of the period, all persons who registered for TPS could be deported if the Congress determines that the situation in El Salvador has sufficiently improved. The Salvadorans have six months to apply for TPS. They must provide the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with their name, age and address in the US. Once they have obtained TPS, they receive work authorizations. They must reapply every six months. Representatives of the Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN) in Los Angeles say that refugees who are denied TPS will have to return to El Salvador. They pointed out that the legislation does not guarantee refugees political asylum, and in effect requires details of their illegal residence in the US. As a result, INS officials will obtain information on the number of Salvadorans and where they can be found, necessary conditions for mass deportations. On Nov. 30, 75 Salvadorans held in INS detention centers around the country were released. According to the Christian Science Monitor, as of late November, approximately 300 Salvadorans were being held in detention centers. During a telephone interview with Notimex on Dec. 6, Catholic missionary Sister Alice Fairchild said that 44 Central Americans were released from the Puerto Isabel detention center in southeastern Texas. Fairchild, who runs a refugee center in Brownsville, Texas, said the detainees were released as a result of the new legislation. (Basic data from The Christian Science Monitor, 11/19/90; Notimex, 11/30/90, 12/06/90)

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