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Salvadoran Refugees Attempt To Occupy Embassy In Panama City

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Dec. 11 in Panama City, Salvadoran Consul Aida Velasco told reporters that following police actions to dislodge nearly 100 Salvadoran refugees maintaining a vigil in front of the Salvadoran Embassy, a dozen of their number attempted to occupy the building. In November, the refugees marched over 196 km. from their camp, Ciudad Romero, to demand that the Salvadoran government permit their return to El Salvador. Salvadoran officials have refused to talk with the refugees. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has refused to supply food or medicine to the refugees in Panama City, and has distributed a minimal amount to counterparts remaining in the Ciudad Romero settlement. In December 1989, the Salvadoran refugee community in Panama, which numbers between 400 and 600, requested that San Salvador permit them to repatriate this month to a coastal area in Usulután department known as Nancuchiname. The government had offered this area to another group of repatriates, who rejected it. At present, the government refuses to permit the Panama-based refugee group to resettle in the same area. (Basic data from AFP, 12/11/90; Salpress, 12/06/90)

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