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Central American Bishops Criticize Economic Policies, Articulate Concern Over Prevailing "culture Of Death"

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On Nov. 29 in Tegucigalpa at the conclusion of a four-day meeting, the Central American Bishops Conference released a statement criticizing economic austerity policies implemented by regional governments. The bishops asserted that the social consequences of these policies resulting from further impoverishment of the majority of Central Americans outweigh any possible benefits, and ultimately undermine peace and stability. The statement said, "We Central American Catholics cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the prolonged suffering of our nations, be it from fratricidal wars in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, or from the common crime, violence and starvation which have overrun these lands. We are also pained by the...corruption which pervades all areas of life, and the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of the most detestable crimes. Almost inadvertently, we have internalized a culture of death. We have become accustomed to living amidst horrible violence, and the most shocking massacres and crimes have left us indifferent." Next, the bishops stressed the need for Central American governments to support voluntary repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and to provide guarantees for their security. Finally, the conference expressed concern over drug trafficking in the region, and attempts by more economically developed nations to transform Central America into a "toxic waste dump." (Basic data from Agence France- Presse, 11/29/91)

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