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On Situation Of Salvadoran Refugees In U.S.

by Deborah Tyroler

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US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) authorities recently announced that nearly 200,000 Salvadorans residing in the US under the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program could be deported beginning June 30, 1992. Implemented in 1990, the TPS program provided participants with work permits and legal residency status for 18 months. Scheduled for review in June this year, the TPS will be terminated when the US Congress determines that Salvadorans can safely return home. INS spokespersons in Washington said notification of deportation does not mean that it will occur immediately. According to the spokespersons, INS will not be able to initiate the deportation process until March 1993, at least in the Washington area. Pedro Aviles, director of the Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN) in Washington, said El Salvador is not prepared to receive 200,000 persons nor to lose an estimated US\$700 million per year sent by Salvadorans in the US to family members. Salvadoran Ambassador to the US Miguel Salverria told the Washington Post that these remittances are "one of the most important forms of aid to the [national] economy." Aviles indicated that some refugees might apply for political asylum until the situation in El Salvador is stabilized. In a Jan. 9 letter to US Secretary of State James Baker and Deputy Attorney General William Barr, Rep. Joe Moakley (D- Mass.) called on the Bush administration to extend the TPS program for an additional 18 months. He said the Salvadoran government, opposition parties and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) all agree that more time is needed before the refugees can be reincorporated into society. Moakley noted that the economic strain resulting from massive numbers of returned refugees to El Salvador could endanger implementation of peace accords. In addition, he said, extremists opposed to the negotiated peace could pose a threat to the physical safety of repatriates. (Basic data from Salpress, 01/10/92; Spanish news service EFE, 01/11/92)

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