

**Action by
Canada**

First of all, what has Canada done to promote a peaceful solution to the conflict?

I met twice in 1981, in January and December, with representatives of the revolutionary leadership, the FMLN/FDR, to listen to their point of view and to urge negotiations with a view to a democratic solution through elections. I offered Canada's good offices to provide a site in Canada, or abroad at a Canadian embassy, for such negotiations. The FMLN/FDR rejected these efforts; they prefer direct access to power, whether through negotiation or by force of arms.

We continue to favour a peaceful settlement brought about by the Salvadorans themselves. Canada is ready to seize any opportunity to play a constructive role with the agreement of all the parties concerned. Canada, like the United States, has welcomed the efforts of President Lopez Portillo of Mexico to prepare the ground for a solution in El Salvador and to reduce tension between the United States, Cuba and Nicaragua.

Increased aid

Canada has announced greatly increased aid levels, over half a billion dollars, for the Caribbean Basin countries. This reflects our conviction that the answer to tension there is social and economic development rather than the force of arms. This was the basis for Canadian association with the Caribbean Basin Initiative. Within a greatly expanded Canadian aid program for Central America, Canada will consider restoring bilateral aid to El Salvador if conditions there permit. With regard to aid to Nicaragua, we have clearly announced our readiness to give aid to that country. But we have also expressed to the Nicaraguans our concern at what may be a growing tendency by them to depart from their own stated principles of political pluralism and non-intervention in the affairs of other countries.

Why did we support the elections in El Salvador? Most simply, because Canadians favour democratic government. President Duarte appeared determined to establish such a government despite violent opposition from the left and right. He was putting his position, policies and life on the line, as he did in the 1972 elections and their aftermath, as were all those who stood as candidates.

However, the FMLN/FDR rejected the elections in favour of what they termed a "comprehensive political settlement" under which they would form a government, presumably with Christian Democrats and others initially. The FMLN/FDR was extremely vague on when this new government would itself submit to elections.

I should also point out that the vast majority of members of the Organization of American States supported the elections. I might also note that Costa Rica in 1948 and Venezuela in 1960 emerged from civil war through elections. I should add in this regard that it would be tragic and unacceptable if Costa Rica — the only state in the region with a history of democracy — should be destabilized as a result of the spreading violence; Costa Rica, which has invested its capital in social programs rather than weapons and armies.
