



Amnesty International

CANADA

1-800-266-3789

www.amnesty.ca

The Honourable Pierre S. Pettigrew
Minister for International Trade
c/o Trade Policy Planning Division (EAI)/Central America
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G2

by fax: 613 944 0757

February 2, 2001

Dear Minister,

I am writing in response to your letter of January 11th, seeking Amnesty International's views regarding priorities, objectives and concerns about a free trade agreement with the Central American nations of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Amnesty International does not take a position on the issue of free trade itself. We neither promote nor oppose trade liberalization. Further, as we are not a trade or economic organization, we are not able to comment on substantive commercial and economic development issues. We do, however, have serious concerns that any moves towards free trade, such as this proposal, include comprehensive and meaningful attention to human rights.

The concern that free trade not proceed at the expense of human rights is an important one here. Each of these four countries have had longstanding and serious human rights problems. While the states of Central America are emerging from earlier periods of civil war and armed conflict, they still face profound human rights challenges which require ongoing attention both nationally and internationally.

Any Canada/Central America free trade agreement must, therefore, be matched by a strong, vibrant mechanism for addressing human rights concerns and promoting reform. Amnesty International has highlighted this same issue in the context of the discussions regarding a proposed Free Trade Agreement for the Americas. We have pointed to the fact that there is a human rights system in the Americas, but that it is not universally supported in the hemisphere and has recently had to withstand attempts by some states to see it weakened and undermined.

National Office
214 Montreal Road, 4th Floor
Vanier, ON K1L 1A4
Telephone: 613.744.7667
Fax: 613.746.2411
Email: info@amnesty.ca

Toronto Office
56 Temperance Street, 8th Floor
Toronto, ON M5H 3V5
Telephone: 416.363.9933
Fax: 416.363.3103
Email: toronto@amnesty.ca

Pacific Regional Office
4-3664 East Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V5K 2A9
Telephone: 604.294.5160
Fax: 604.294.5130
Email: pro@amnesty.ca