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International Actors and Issues

Persuasion Essay from the White House: President Obama on the Salvadorean Refugee Crisis

My fellow Americans, today I want to speak to you about a new refugee crisis that the United States is currently being faced with. Since the 1960s, the most powerful gangs in El Salvador have been terrorizing civilians. These gangs, such as MS-13, M-18 and Calle 18 have spilled the blood of thousands of innocent people amidst the fighting they have perpetrated against one another (Insight Crime). The presence of these gangs and their violence has even been discovered in our own country, currently concentrated in the Los Angeles area. In March 2012, the largest two gangs, MS-13 and Barrio 18, established a truce. Though seen as forfeiting sovereignty to these gangs by the El Salvadoran government, it did serve to stop the violence for a time (Insight Crime). However, earlier this year, in March of 2015, the gang truce collapsed and a total of 481 people were murdered. This murder rate was 52% higher than that of the same time period last year (The Guardian).

As a result, our border patrol has recently reported that there is an influx of young Salvadorean women who have to come us, seeking asylum from fear of gang members who are exploiting them and targeting their families through extortion or ransoms. Though it is true that tensions between the United States and Latin American on the subject of immigration have been on the rise as of late, it is our responsibility as defenders of human rights to help these women in their time of need. With the full support of the international community, the United States recognizes that it does have the “responsibility to protect” these women and to put a stop to this violation of basic security in El Salvador. We know that there is a “strong and highly significant

link between state security and women's security" (Hudson 2012). Furthermore, this "[responsibility to protect] calls for the international community to intervene whenever 'a population is suffering serious harm'" as was laid out by the "International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS)" (Pape 2012, pp. 51). As the most powerful country in the world, and an ally to El Salvador, we must respond to this call of distress and, with the oversight of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), we will facilitate a smooth transition for these women.

"[M]any of you have asked, why not leave this to other countries... And several people wrote to me, we should not be the world's policeman. I agree. And I have a deeply held preference for peaceful solutions" (Pres. Obama 2013). Nevertheless, the United States will not stand idly by while civil unrest plagues the sovereign nation of El Salvador. As the foremost leaders in global humanitarianism, the United States must open our doors and stand up to protect these brave young women who are just seeking out the basic human rights we as Americans, are all afforded by the Bill of Rights. Once their safety is assured, the United States will work with the leaders of the El Salvador government to help stabilize and secure the nation. The United States is also prepared to place heavy sanction on the nation of El Salvador, if it is not willing to do what is necessary to secure its own territory for its own people. I can guarantee, that when these women are ready to return home, I promise them a secure nation to return to.

For these Salvadorean women, we must be ready to "eliminate the one-year filing deadline that bars refugees with well-founded fears of persecution from asylum" (Human Rights First). Let us treat these women like the victims they are and not prolong their suffering with bureaucratic obstacles. We should also "[e]nsure a [f]air and [e]ffective [a]djudication [s]ystem

for [a]sylum [c]ases” in general, by expanding “the Legal Orientation Program (LOP) to provide... asylum seekers with basic legal information” so they can be better equipped in transitioning to the United States (Human Rights First). For too long these women’s rights have been infringed upon; let us help them restore their lives to peace and dignity and protect what is rightfully theirs. “The White House, working with the Departments of State and Homeland Security, should develop a formal global system to fast-track refugee status determinations and resettlement processing for refugees facing imminent harm in countries of first asylum” (Human Rights First). Let’s change the way we deal with these refugee situations and prepare for our nation for a globalized future.

“I know Americans want all of us in Washington, especially me, to concentrate on the task of building our nation here at home, putting people back to work, educating our kids, growing our middle class” (Pres. Obama 2013). As President of the United States it my job to be just as concerned for the safety and well-being of your loved-ones. “Franklin Roosevelt once said our national determination to keep free of foreign wars and foreign entanglements cannot prevent us from feeling deep concern when ideals and principles that we have cherished are challenged” (Pres. Obama)

“My fellow Americans, for nearly seven decades the United States has been the anchor of global security. This has meant doing more than forging international agreements. It has meant enforcing them. The burdens of leadership are often heavy, but the world's a better place because we have borne them” (Pres. Obama 2013). Taking on the task of helping these refugees seeking asylum may seem like a burden that, right now, the United States should not bear. On the contrary, that is what makes America so special, is that in times of true darkness it is us who

always rise from the ashes, united, to combat oppression and “let freedom ring” (The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.). “That's what makes America different. That's what makes us exceptional. With humility, but with resolve, let us never lose sight of that essential truth. Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America” (Pres. Obama 2013).

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