

TESTIMONY OF
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAMES P. MCGOVERN (MA-02)

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

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Honorable Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Rogers – thank you for allowing me this time to present to the Committee some of my priorities for fiscal year 2021.

I would like to thank both of you and the Committee for providing \$1 million in FY 2020 to support the search for the disappeared in El Salvador and for directing the State Department to coordinate the release of all relevant files or documents across all U.S. agencies related to the 1981 El Mozote Massacre in El Salvador.

On January 27th, the presiding judge in the El Mozote case, Judge Jorge Alberto Guzmán Urquilla, sent a letter to Secretary of State Pompeo recognizing and expressing gratitude for this initiative by Congress. The letter was also hand-delivered to the Western Hemisphere Affairs Bureau the first week of February. In the letter to the Secretary of State, Judge Guzmán noted what types of documents and information would be most useful to his review of the case, as well as the U.S. agencies where such files might be located.

I respectfully ask the Committee to follow-up and ensure that FY 2020 funds designated for Conabúsqueda in its search for the disappeared from the Salvadoran civil war be allocated accordingly and in a timely manner. I also ask that the Committee ensure that all files, documents and information requested by Judge Guzmán, as well as the inter-agency coordination directed by this Committee regarding the El Mozote Massacre case, be faithfully and expeditiously carried out.

I also want to thank the Committee for providing the Congressional-Executive Commission on China – the CECC, on which I currently serve as Chair – a one-time increase of \$250,000 to upgrade our prisoner database, which hasn't been updated since 2004. We are currently working with contractors to create a new political prisoner database, preserve and transfer existing data, and support and maintain the system in both English and Chinese.

For Fiscal Year 2021, I am requesting the traditional level of \$2 million for the CECC to continue its important work on human rights in China.

Not wanting to sound like a broken record, but my priorities for Fiscal Year 2021 are similar to prior years:

- Robust funding for global food security programs, including an increase to \$200 million for the Nutrition sub-account within Global Health Programs.
- Maintaining current funding levels for Colombia and ensuring that the majority of funds are targeted at the full implementation of the Peace Accord, promoting human rights, safeguarding human rights defenders and local social leaders, and advancing sustainable,

community-based rural development, especially in those areas most affected by nearly 60 years of war and violence.

- And finally, ensuring that the nations and civil society of Central America – most particularly El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras – have the resources to promote and respect human rights, safeguard human rights defenders, end corruption, strengthen and advance the rule of law and good governance, and ensure that government officials and military, security forces, intelligence agencies and the police no longer engage in human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, or maintain ties with, collude, or benefit or profit from drug trafficking, gangs or other criminal networks.

Madam Chair, I am deeply concerned about the fate of human rights and democracy in each of the Central American countries. Therefore, I believe U.S. aid should prioritize human rights, rule of law, good governance, and ending corruption and official engagement in and benefits from criminal activity. I believe our aid should help young people and families avoid recruitment into gangs, sexual slavery and extortion – to name just three of the many types of violence faced by too many families on a daily basis in the region. Our funds should also help create jobs, support community-based development and environmental stewardship, and strengthen independent judicial systems that will investigate and prosecute human rights abuses, corruption and criminal acts. In El Salvador, it should also include the pursuit of historical cases like the El Mozote Massacre and the Jesuit murders. Resolving these crimes can contribute to breaking centuries of impunity, advancing reconciliation and healing the wounds of war for victims, survivors, their families and Salvadoran society.

Congressman Rogers raised a serious question last year that for too many years he's heard these same requests and rationales, especially on how to combat drugs. I agree. Frankly, however, the U.S. has not supported the, let alone invested in, the strategy detailed in the Peace Accord. In Colombia, tens of thousands of small farmers have come forward, in compliance with the Peace Accord, and declared that they will stop growing illegal crops. But they can't do that in a vacuum. Drug and criminal violence remain pervasive. They need the firm support of the Colombian government to be successful, and the genuine protection of the Colombian police and security forces.

Regrettably, lack of progress, and even setbacks, to reducing illegal crops comes less from *campesino* farmers, and mainly from a lack of political will on the part of civilian and military authorities. Time and again, aerial fumigation has demonstrated that it does not stop the cultivation of coca, and certainly not over the long-term. What is required is to establish the firm and full presence of the state in these formerly ungoverned spaces. The people of these regions have the right to count on the State for democratic governance, financing for alternative livelihoods, rule of law, and the protection of local social leaders. This is a strategy that requires long-term commitment to carry out. But should it work, the results will be longer lasting – not just in combatting drugs, but in expanding the benefits of democracy and development throughout Colombia.

I'll end here, Madam Chair, and welcome any questions or comments that you, Congressman Rogers, or other members of the Committee might have.