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Church leader hits U.S. over Central America

GENEVA (UPI)—The head of the World Council of Churches blamed the United States Wednesday for "much of the responsibility" for the violence and loss of human life in Central America.

Philip Potter, council general secretary and a native of the eastern Caribbean island of Dominica, called on the U.S. to stop all military aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and cease "all U.S. covert operations" in Nicaragua.

"Much of the responsibility for the current situation rests with the administration of the United States of America," he wrote in a letter to the newly formed Latin American Council of Churches.

"It claims an improvement in the human rights situation of El Salvador in order to continue military and economic assistance," Potter said, and seeks to provide similar aid to Guatemala.

POTTER SAID churches face "the forces of death" in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

He said Washington "has encouraged the Honduran authorities in policies which include military collusion with the Salvadoran army"

while cutting off aid to Nicaragua and permitting "the training of anti-Nicaragua paramilitary bands in Florida and California."

"These facts combine to threaten large-scale conflagration for the whole area," Potter said.

Potter, in his lengthy letter, commented on each of the four countries:

● El Salvador: "We see God's gift of life being destroyed, the slaughter of defenseless people." Leaders of those working for human rights and justice "continue to be eliminated through imprisonment, torture and death."

● Guatemala: "Systematic massacres of thousands of the impoverished indigenous population have reached unimaginable proportions."

● Honduras: Refugees from the other countries "have found little security" and "the number of disappeared and imprisoned citizens has increased dramatically in recent months."

● Nicaragua: The country "is being threatened by armed bands operating from Honduras ... in order to destabilize Nicaragua politically and economically."

WORDS OF LOVE

CASE STUDY No. 6

In addition to the information found in this newspaper item, please note that the World Council of Churches has also just been accused (by Morley Safer of CBS Television) of supporting Marxist and Communist countries.

The primary question I see in this item is whether or not it is the loving thing to do to openly attack the government in the fashion that Philip Potter has here. (He is not alone - Jerry Falwell has made similar attacks on different issues. So have others).

The Bible tells us that we are to pray for our leaders so that we

may enjoy a peaceful life in our land. It seems a bit incongruous to so blatantly and openly vilify those for whom we are praying. It would seem that the more appropriate procedure would be to make our displeasure known more privately.

But, on the other hand, prophets like Jeremiah were instructed by God to specifically cry out the indictment against their governments and people loudly for all to hear. Perhaps open accusation is actually kinder because it forces the government to pay attention?

But then again, nobody paid attention to Jeremiah anyway. And God told him that he would be ignored in advance. So maybe that doesn't apply. And maybe God only intended Jeremiah's procedure for Jeremiah's specific case. After all, God has not specifically appeared to us and directly told us to go accuse our leaders.

What do you think?

Is it better to pray quietly for God to direct the hands of our leaders and not actually say anything about their actions directly to them? Or would it be proper to write them a letter complaining about their behavior? Or is it proper to openly accuse them in the newspapers and on television?