Letters

To the Editor

Please allow me to introduce myself to you: my name is G. William Rubagumya. I am originally from the country of Rwanda via the refugee camps of Uganda and I have been in the USA for the last 7 years. As you may have guessed, my concern is with the refugees that I left behind both in Uganda and other surrounding countries. Myself and other Rwandans in this country have formed a nonprofit organization, The Tutsi Relief Foundation Inc., whose main purpose is to aid in every way possible, but with primary emphasis on education and relocation of those who are able to adapt to the changed environment.

My purpose for writing is to introduce the organization to you and to solicit assistance in finding homes and educational aid for our youth who would otherwise be denied these basics of life by circumstances beyond their control. The Foundation is now attempting to secure scholarships from various schools.

I must say that the Canadian official who was in charge of the Embassy in Kampala acted with such concern in 1982 and we believe that his actions were the difference between life and death for many of our people, and Canada seems to be the only nation that is actively and genuinely interested in the Rwandese’ issue. We commend you all and hope that the leadership there will retain that humanitarian touch in the future.

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To the Editor

We in the Immigration Section of the Canadian Embassy in Buenos Aires always read with great interest your periodical “Refuge”. A substantial part of our own workload involves refugees and we are always keen to learn of refugee developments and issues around the world.

Given the usual excellence of your publication we were therefore surprised to note a significant error in the editorial comments which preceded the text of the address of the Canadian permanent mission in Geneva to the UNHCR Executive Committee.

The refugee report to which Ambassador Alan Beesley made reference was of course not written by the Agha Khan, but rather by his uncle, Prince Saddrudin, who was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees before Poul Hartling assumed this responsibility.

This must surely be only one of many letters you will receive concerning this error, however while the Agha Khan has effected many worthwhile activities on his own, surely his uncle’s beneficial activities should not be included among them.

Colleen L. Cupples
First Secretary and Consul
Canadian Embassy, Buenos Aires

To the Editor

An unfortunate misunderstanding has arisen in the printing of my article on the Guatemalan refugee situation in Mexico (Dec. '83), as the result of some errors of fact and judgement made by the editors of Refuge and my own over-

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To Our Readers

We invite our readers to submit news items or information for publication in Refuge.
Deportation of Guatemalans

Dear Friends:
The attached letter from the Minister of Employment & Immigration gives an encouraging answer to the concerns you and I have expressed.

It seems, though, that we ought to keep up our encouragement to the Minister to send no more Guatemalans back to Guatemala involuntarily.

The Reverend Dan Heap, M.P.  
House of Commons  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Heap:
As I promised, in answer to your question in the House on December 14, I have examined the question of deportation to Guatemala to determine whether persons removed to Guatemala from Canada face any danger on their return.

First of all, I would like to confirm that the numbers involved are smaller than reported by voluntary groups. Only 14 Guatemalans have been removed from Canada this year. The 56 refugee claims rejected on first review so far in 1983 will not result in further removals for some time because of the protracted review and appeal procedures available to these claimants.

In Guatemala, the problems are well known. Unemployment is 40 percent and repression by official organizations and para-military groups has produced flagrant violations of human rights. Naturally, returning anyone involuntarily into this milieu is a very serious matter. Our record in this regard bears out our concern. Fully 75 percent of refugee claims from Guatemalans have been accepted this year on first review and an additional 8 percent of refusals were approved when examined on purely humanitarian grounds. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has acknowledged that, in our approach, we have not only fulfilled our legal obligations, but have exceeded them. The question is, because of general danger, as is the case with El Salvador, should everyone be offered de facto protection regardless of the merit of his claim.

In this regard, the situation is not so clear. The picture of violence and of widespread economic dislocation argues in favour of this approach. On the other hand, reports from the area also suggest that apolitical people have nothing to fear on return if they have not spoken out or worked against the Guatemalan government.

To deal with this dilemma, I have ordered a full review of the immigration implications of the situation in Guatemala. In the meantime, I will ensure no further deportation orders are handed down. I expect to be able to report further by the end of January.

John Roberts  
Minister  
Employment and Immigration Canada