

**AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION ON
HUMAN RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA**

American Baptists have had a long history of interest in, and fellowship with, the Baptist Churches in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Mexico and Haiti. Today, amid political and economic tension in a number of nations in the Caribbean and Latin America, Christian leaders of those nations are taking courageous stands for the improvement of conditions of life for their people.

The United States Government has voiced its desire to develop more just and stable relationships with this part of the world. On the basis of American Baptist policy statements in regard to human rights and international economic justice, we undertake the following guide for action on Latin America and the Caribbean.

RESOLVED THAT:

1. In obedience to God as American Baptists, we condemn oppression and exploitation in Latin America in its many forms: economic, political, racial, religious, and whether open and visible or hidden and subtle;
2. We encourage American Baptists to engage in study and action: to understand the problems of Latin America today, to seek ways to express solidarity, and to engage in action with the peoples of Latin America on behalf of economic betterment and human rights;
3. As American Baptists, we shall support programs in Latin America which work for the economic betterment of the poor:
 - a. through study and the questioning of the indiscriminate activities of multinational corporations, and explicit or implicit approval of the United States and Latin American Governments, which lead to: loss of land to the farmer, the increase of dependency on imported goods, the influence of foreign cultural patterns, and foreign intervention;
 - b. through encouragement of those business ventures which are ecologically sound and which provide economic benefits to all sectors of society;
 - c. through encouragement of U.S. Government, United Nations, private and church development programs which especially assist, with appropriate technology, the poverty stricken and racial minorities to secure land and achieve economic growth.

4. We urge the United States Government to develop and activate a concrete and sound policy on Latin America that will foster peace, provide economic betterment for the majority poor, and give strong support for human rights in all Latin American countries;

5. We express solidarity with the churches of Latin America and will support evangelistic efforts which affect individual and community life: enlisting lives in commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and also recognizing the prophetic implications of the Gospel and its effects in the social, political, cultural and economic arenas.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1980

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - March 1989

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POLICY BASE

American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights

As American Baptists we declare the following rights to be basic human rights, and we will support programs and measures to assure these rights:

1. The right of every person to choose a religion freely, to maintain religious belief or unbelief without coercion; the right for communities of faith to meet together to engage in public worship, to witness publicly to others, to speak prophetically from religious conviction to government and society, to live out religious beliefs, and to be free from governmental intrusion, coercion, and control in the free exercise of conscience and religion;

6. The right to follow the dictates of conscience, to express dissent individually or in groups to prevailing ideas, governments and institutions;

9. The right to human dignity, to be respected and treated as a person, and to be protected against discrimination without regard to age, sex, race, class, marital status, income, national origin, legal status, culture or condition in society;

11. The right of citizenship in a nation, to participate in the political process, to form political parties, to have a voice in decisions made in the political arenas, to be secure from fear of deportation or expulsion, to emigrate and to have political asylum;

SUPPORTING POSITION

Resolution on Economic Justice (International) - 1969

We also urge a reversal of the present trend toward decreasing foreign economic, social and technical aid by:

d. channeling of a minimum of fifty percent of all foreign aid through multilateral organizations;

We urge the American Baptist Convention and its agencies to:

a. interpret these issues of justice in international development;

b. cooperate in ecumenical efforts to create a supportive constituency for international development;

c. represent the witness of the American Baptist Convention on trade and aid before executive and legislative bodies.

Supporting Data

Amnesty International
2112 Broadway, N.Y. 10023
"Impartiality and the Defense of Human Rights"

Organization of American States
Washington, D.C.
"Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Nicaragua"

Washington Office on Latin America
110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002
Update, Latin America, October 1978
