

# MEDICAL AID FOR EL SALVADOR

January 6, 1986

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Kochlyama  
545 W. 126th Street , #3 B.  
New York, New York 10027

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Kochlyama,

My name is Sandra Brim and I am the new Executive Director of Medical Aid for El Salvador. Last month I had the opportunity to visit El Salvador and personally inspect several of the medical facilities established with your generous support.

I want to report what I saw so that you can appreciate how Medical Aid for El Salvador has used your gift to save precious lives.

But before I tell you the specifics of our medical aid program, I want to share with you some of my memories of El Salvador. I entered the country through its capital, San Salvador. There I saw barrios where children had no place to play except ponds of raw sewage. I saw refugee camps so crowded and unliveable they made me ashamed to be so close to such misery with no direct way to help.

After listening to the most desperate testimony imaginable from victims of war, I left for the countryside -- the remote rural areas -- where the war is being fought and our medical aid has been delivered.

I cannot tell you the details of how I got through the battle-lines and crossed into the so-called rebel-controlled zones. Too many people risked their lives to get me to the countryside in order to make this eyewitness report. But I want you to know the difficulty under which this trip was made. I went at the end of the rainy season and because of the thick mud each step of our 90-mile trek was both slow and arduous. Because danger could strike at any moment, we walked in almost total silence. But when unafraid, we excitedly exchanged impressions of the lushness of the rain forest, the incredibly intense flowers, the millions of butterflies. How could this Garden of Eden possibly be a battlezone?

Only when crossing the Sumpul River where just a few years ago hundreds of women and children were massacred by government troops, did I learn first-hand how fragile peace is. One moment we were splashing through the water and the next moment we heard the drone of an aircraft. Terror-struck, I dove for cover. Observed by one

(please turn page)

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aircraft, I feared we would be bombed by another.

I fell and badly wrenched my knee. If this had happened back home, it would have meant little. But in El Salvador where the most basic medicine is simply not available, a common cold can quickly become life-threatening and a smashed knee with miles of jungles and mountains ahead was suddenly cause for concern, if not panic.

Now I was in need of medical aid. First I was seen by a barefoot doctor, named Maria Serrano. As Maria examined my knee she told me about the ten-week extensive training course she had attended to become a "barefoot" doctor. Imagine how I felt when I realized that this program was provided by funds and medicines sent by you and Medical Aid for El Salvador. To assure me she told me that the next day we could go to a hospital where I could be treated further, if needed. The hospital where we were taken was a hospital in name only. It measured about twelve feet by twenty-five feet. It had ten "beds" -- in reality, hammocks. The operating room used battery-powered lights because there was no electricity. The operating table was a cross-section of a local tree, cut and polished. The walls of the operating room were singed with carbon because when the batteries failed, they resorted to torches.

But when we met the doctor, he was not apologetic for the spartan conditions. To the contrary, he was full of smiles and full of pride when he showed me the medicines in his possession -- all sent by you and Medical Aid for El Salvador!

Who were the patients in this most primitive clinic? Tragically, all but one were children suffering from malnutrition or intestinal disease. And the one exception was a 12-year-old child with a different malady -- he was missing his right hand. It was blown off in a rocket attack which targeted his village . . . a cluster of 10 small one-room homes. Because of our antibiotics, the doctor told me this boy lived. I wish you could have been there -- for the briefest moment I was filled with the joy and satisfaction that comes from helping to save a young life.

Once treated with a combination of native medicines and anti-inflammatory drugs sent by Medical Aid, my knee began to heal and my inspection tour continued. I visited two small clinics which had been bombed to smithereens during aerial attacks in Chalatenango Province. One of these clinics had originally been established by a grant from Medical Aid for El Salvador. Because they were so easily pin-pointed from the sky, they were targets for bombing missions. Our newest clinics, you'll be happy to know, stress mobility and in fact are moved, on an average, once every two weeks!

One such clinic, bought and paid for this year by Medical Aid for El Salvador was named by the local medical team, the "Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital"! Can you imagine the incongruity of it all? Bombed by our government, yet naming their hospitals after our fallen leaders!

I am enclosing for you a map of El Salvador. The map highlights not only the locations where we have been able, thanks to your generosity, to deliver life-saving medical supplies, but also the areas currently under bombardment by government gunships (supplied by the U.S.). You'll notice there are far more bombing targets than there is medical aid. But at the bottom of the map is a summary of what we have been able to get through -- and our accomplishments are great given the hardships, and

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given the fact that our own government spends one thousand dollars for every dollar sent by us in medical aid.

With this as our history -- with four years of accomplishments to our credit -- I am asking you to continue to be a part of this fledgling health care delivery system which runs only because of your continued financial support.

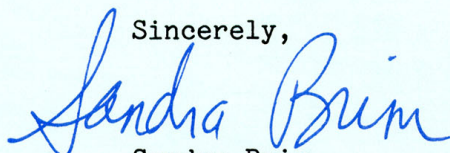
When Ed Asner began Medical Aid for El Salvador in 1981, he and the other members of the Board of Directors had no idea they could make such a difference.

But with my own eyes I saw the difference. I saw a small child, not yet five years of age, who without doubt would have died had it not been for medicines we hand-carried in. And I personally heard the thanks of a mother who herself had been treated -- and saved -- with medicines earlier delivered.

I would have liked to convey these messages of thanks to you personally and tell you that our job is over, the work done. But the truth is that the U.S. government is increasing its delivery of military aid at an alarming rate. And if we don't try to counter this death-dealing, who will? Congress? Private corporations? The truth is that the victims of this war in El Salvador have no one to turn to. If we don't come through, no one else will.

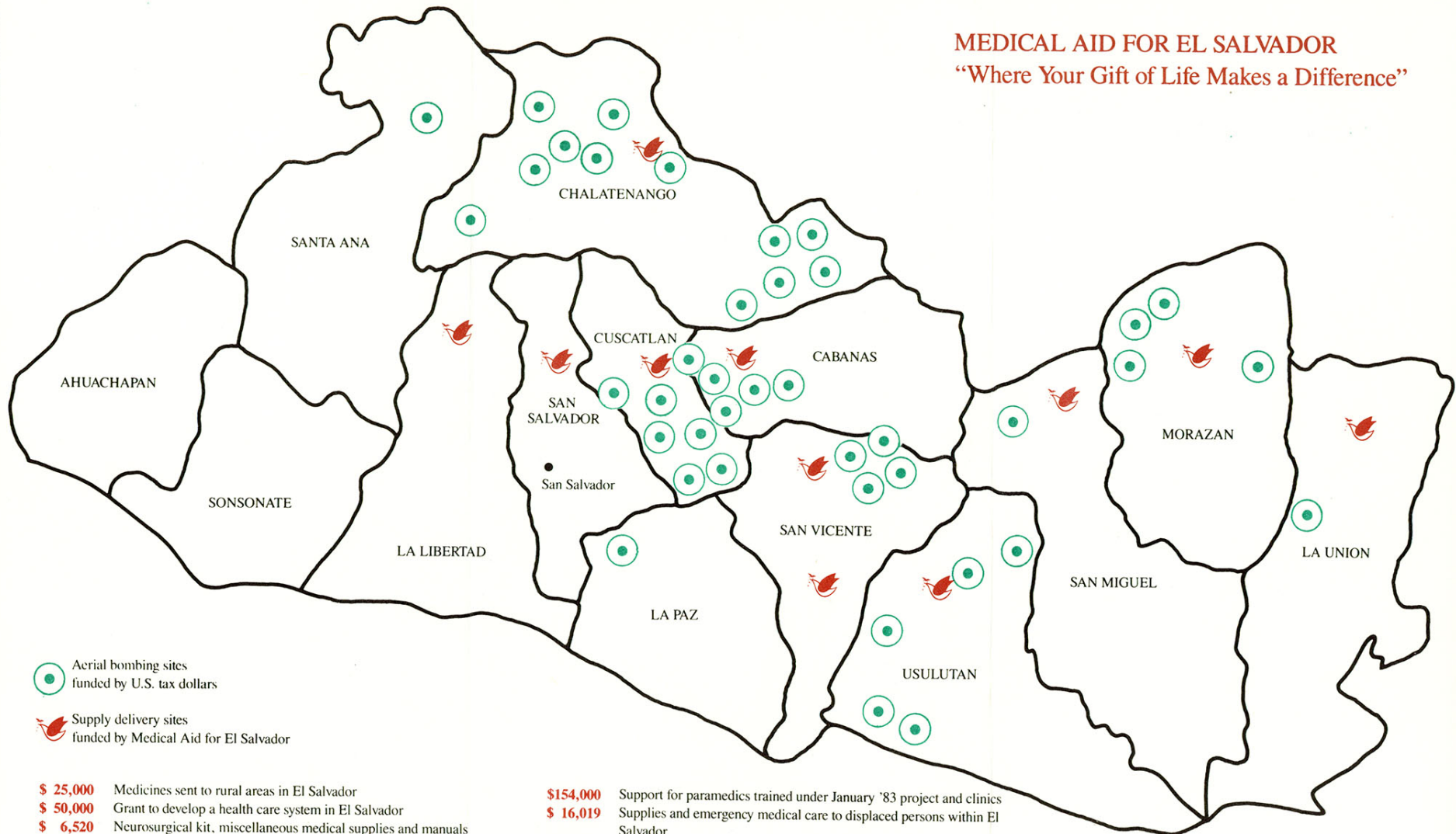
With the need so great (and growing), won't you please help again? Thank you.


Sincerely,




Sandra Brim

**MEDICAL AID FOR EL SALVADOR**  
 "Where Your Gift of Life Makes a Difference"



 Aerial bombing sites funded by U.S. tax dollars

 Supply delivery sites funded by Medical Aid for El Salvador

- \$ 25,000 Medicines sent to rural areas in El Salvador
- \$ 50,000 Grant to develop a health care system in El Salvador
- \$ 6,520 Neurosurgical kit, miscellaneous medical supplies and manuals
- \$ 79,568 Grant to develop and maintain "brigadistas" — rural health care workers who travel throughout El Salvador providing emergency medical care, general medical attention and education in preventive medicine
- \$ 2,523 Laboratory equipment and supplies
- \$ 50,000 Grants to a clinic on Guazapa volcano
- \$ 42,115 Grant to complete supplying and staffing a clinic in the province of San Miguel
- \$ 18,917 General medical aid to Guazapa volcano region
- \$ 62,866 Grant to establish a minor surgery clinic serving several villages in Usulután province

- \$154,000 Support for paramedics trained under January '83 project and clinics
- \$ 16,019 Supplies and emergency medical care to displaced persons within El Salvador
- \$ 52,000 Grants for a clinic in Morazan province
- \$ 57,000 Grants for a maternal and infant care program in rural El Salvador
- \$ 7,744 Special burn ointment and other pharmaceuticals sent to victims of napalm and white phosphorous bombs
- \$ 45,000 Grants to establish three mobile village clinics in Cuscatlan province
- \$ 35,000 Continuing support for Usulután clinic
- \$ 15,000 Grant to establish a mobile clinic in La Libertad province
- \$ 2,440 Shipment of clinical supplies and medicines to student-run clinic at University of El Salvador

**\$721,712 delivered!**