

U.S. Ideological Test For Asylum Seekers

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Body

To the Editor:

The statements by the spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service in your news account of recent raids on Long Island (July 28) are inaccurate and misleading. Contrary to his suggestion, in the first six months of 1986, immigration authorities approved only 36 of 449 Salvadoran cases (8 percent).

Yet during the same period, the authorities approved 407 of 708 Nicaraguan cases (57 percent).

Such statistical disparities have been traditional in **U.S. asylum** practice - and the authorities have steadfastly denied them and sought to obfuscate the issue by, for example, saying that "El Salvador ranks fifth" - actually now sixth - "in terms of numbers granted **asylum**." Such tactics are disingenuous at best.

The inescapable fact is that refuge in America is distributed on essentially **ideological** grounds. It is far easier to win **asylum** if a person flees a Communist-dominated regime than if he or she flees a merely authoritarian regime, particularly one with which our Government has close dealings, irrespective of a poor human rights record. The extreme reluctance of the authorities to face this issue squarely suggests that they, too, consider such a distortion to be unfair and legally questionable.

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New York, July 29, 1986

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