

1412

December 10, 1981

To: Mr. Abrams

Subject: An Agenda For Elliott Abrams

This afternoon I attended a Human Rights Day Community Luncheon, given by the United Nations Association of the USA at the International Inn (ref. attached program). Attendance came to about 350. The program was chaired by Carmen Delgado Votaw, a good Puerto Rican friend of mine active in inter-American affairs and the campaign for ERA. The main speaker was Cong. Tom Harkin (D.-Iowa). His speech was entitled "An Agenda For Elliott Abrams". The full text is attached.

Very briefly, Harkin was highly critical of the Administration's human rights performance thus far. However, he was optimistic with regard to your appointment, remarking that you are "light years ahead" in your "understanding of human rights than was Ernest Lefever or most of the other people considered for this office". And he added: "I think we should welcome Elliott to his new job. He seems to be a man of intelligence and good faith and we wish him well. He can, if he chooses, help end the hypocrisy and callousness that has characterized the Administration's non-policy on human rights". Harkin then outlined a nine point agenda for human rights action, stating: "None of the points clash with Mr. Abrams' statements on human rights. All of the points would help to advance American interests, to ease suffering, and to save lives".

Harkin's speech received warm applause from the pro-human rights audience. I have worked closely with his office for several years, of course, and following the speech I talked with him briefly. Harkin repeated his optimism over your appointment and said he would like to talk with you fairly early, at your convenience.

George Lister

cc: Steve Palmer

2