



The bishops of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion issue the following pastoral statement regarding the plight of families and individuals who cross U.S. border seeking refuge.

The statement follows:

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself...". (Leviticus 19:34).

"I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' (Matthew 25:42-43,45).

We, the bishops of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, are united in our concern for the well-being of the sojourner, immigrant and alien. As we have seen in recent news reports, migrants coming to the United States for asylum are subjected to horrendous living conditions.¹ Some children have been separated from family members indefinitely.² Many being detained are held well beyond the legally mandated holding period.³ Recently, news reports tell us that in El Paso, Texas, as many as 900 children were being detained in facilities that were designed to house 125 persons.⁴ We are stunned at the images of the senseless death of Oscar Alberto Martínez who drowned along with his 23-month-old daughter, Angie Valeria, while trying to cross the border.⁵

Our national leaders have a moral and legal responsibility to care for those who seek safety in our land. According to the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the U.S. has an international obligation to provide safety for those seeking asylum.⁶ Yet, many coming to our country are being thwarted in their attempt to do so legally.⁷ Often, they are misled into signing documents giving up their legal rights.⁸ Children are being separated from relatives and classified as "unaccompanied."⁹ The goal should be to process claims for asylum quickly and efficiently without undue burden or hardship, not do all we can to send migrants back to the place they have fled. We urge the Administration to uphold our nation's commitment to international laws, ensuring the dignity and fair treatment of all persons, especially the children and the most vulnerable.

In addition to the Immigration issues at our border, we are concerned about the growing hostility to those immigrants already living here in the U.S. We are troubled by reports regarding how Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents are sent out to conduct raids aimed at rounding up and deporting undocumented individuals.¹⁰ While Administration Officials claim that those being targeted are "criminals" others are being harmed in the process. Most of the immigrants coming here to live have left their homeland in order to provide safety and security for their families. Yet, these current actions are causing undue fear, anxiety and trauma. Immigrants who are members of

our own local faith communities are growing concerned that they may be targeted next. This has now become “our” issue – it is affecting “our family.”

We call upon our nation’s leaders to set aside political differences in order to act swiftly in passing a comprehensive overhaul of our immigration process so that it is fair, just, and compassionate. We also urge the faithful in our own parishes to get involved and do what they can to provide safety and protection to the foreigner and alien. This is part of our moral obligation as followers of Jesus Christ, who, together with his family, was once a refugee in a foreign land.

The Most Rev. Francis Krebs, Presiding Bishop

The Right Rev. Armando Leyva, Bishop of the Diocese of California

The Right Rev. Raphael Adams, Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America

The Right Rev. Kedda Keough, Bishop for the Pacific Northwest

Bishop Denise Donato, Auxiliary Bishop

¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/nearly-300-migrant-children-removed-texas-facility-described-appaling-n1021151>

² <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/trump-admin-reuniting-migrant-families-may-not-be-possible>

³ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/05/30/minors-at-border-have-been-held-longer-than-legal-limits/>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/us/migrant-children-border-soap.html>

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/26/politics/mexico-father-daughter-dead-rio-grande-wednesday/index.html>

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolStatusOfRefugees.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.texasmonthly.com/politics/immigrant-advocates-question-legality-of-latest-federal-tactics/>

⁸ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/immigration-officials-pressure-separated-parents-deportation-form_n_5b3c060ee4b09e4a8b28656e?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLnNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADp1B_IWY4O02tPpJ3ZTuww3sebcI5m6sFR9XRdcPexgmN5wAAuvJSeGzsHwm2d1Gks0kxpKaqVfd2vJAYdhzeQKXSGiIzpmAkyWO_Eb- zA3Nd6E3gg3BvcXxzB7-cQVPGUF_fP5fKXYpABjnSTwzQMblQsNnfPEavRvq0C58l2

⁹ <https://www.vox.com/2019/2/21/18234767/parents-separated-children-families-border-trump-jails>

¹⁰ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/ice-launch-mass-raids-targeting-undocumented-families-sunday-n1020446>