

Network of Religious Communities Calls for Just, Fair and Humane Treatment of Refugees and Immigrants at US Borders.

The Network of Religious Communities, through its Board of Governors, expresses its outrage and horror at the inhumane treatment of immigrants, including children, and especially asylum seekers, at the southern border.

Focusing on moral issues rather than political ones, the Network deplores the damage already done to children by forcibly separating them from parents, as well as the pain of the parents. The likelihood is that this damage will continue if children and parents are both jailed. The Academy of Pediatrics confirms that children will likely experience developmental harm as they develop under this toxic stress, leading to difficulties learning to walk, learning speech, even learning to love and relate to others.

These are human beings like us, children like our own, and all religions promote human dignity and people's care and protection required by God and by the religious community. Imagine your family being torn asunder by the government. The parents suffer too from losing their children.

Those seeking to enter our country are not criminals; they are simply applying for asylum and immigration in person. Immigrants come to our borders for help, after they have fled violence, injustice, persecution, even death in their home countries. They have a right to apply for asylum, and our government is obligated, under both American and international law, to consider it carefully and justly. The right to secure our borders does not entail treating people in an inhumane manner.

Although the government says it is no longer separating children from parents, it is not reuniting those who have been previously separated. Children are still in cages. There is genuine concern among knowledgeable former immigration officials, fear that many will never be reunited!

This not justice. It is not what our leaders were elected to do. It makes our land into a heartless, cruel nation.

Beyond Western New York religious communities, Pope Francis, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the United Methodists, the Episcopal Presiding Bishop, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA General Assembly, the Parliament of the World's Religions, and other religious bodies, as well as the United Nations, have objected to the U.S. Government's treatment of people arriving at the U.S. borders and in particular the separation and jailing of families.

Airlines, and their flight crews have objected to carrying children removed from parents on their flights. Individuals and groups have expressed their solidarity by generously donating millions of dollars for bail and for legal representation of persons affected. Refugee support groups are at work now finding parents and children to reunite. Even first ladies have spoken out publicly.

It is our earnest hope that we as a nation will grow in compassion for those who suffer most. Our religious traditions share the conviction that caring for the vulnerable is an act of holiness. We ask us all to search our consciences.

The Network of Religious Communities is an organization of denominations, congregations and religious communities located in and serving Western New York. Our member organizations include: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant), Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Unitarian/Universalists. (A full list of organizational representatives endorsing this statement is available upon request.)