



# MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS

## *Peace, Social Justice and Integrity of Creation*

[www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)

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### **Justice and mercy, not 'zero tolerance' for immigrant families**

**WASHINGTON, DC** — In the strongest possible terms, the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns denounces the new “zero-tolerance” immigration policies enacted by the United States on May 4, including the criminal prosecution of anyone who crosses the U.S.-Mexico border illegally and the unnecessary breaking apart of families as a means of deterrence. Placed in context these policies illustrate the next steps the United States has taken down an already dark path – a path clouded by fear and distorted ideologies that violate our core values and further diminish the United States’ role as a world leader.

As a Catholic missionary organization advocating for justice and peace around the world, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns speaks from the experience of our missionaries and the communities with which they work, more often than not communities of migrants and refugees fleeing from violent conflict, natural disasters and hunger. We bear witness to their suffering, their hope, and their will to live. We join Pope Francis in expressing our solidarity with migrants around the world: Welcoming others means welcoming God in person.

“We believe that in the process of enforcing immigration laws, the U.S. government must protect the human rights and dignity of all migrants, with particular consideration for those most vulnerable – refugees, asylum seekers, and children,” said Gerry Lee, Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. “Instead, the United States is abandoning the discretion it has under the law and enacting violent policies that inflict pain and suffering on the most vulnerable migrants as a means to convince others not to attempt the journey.”

To criminalize those who come seeking asylum, to escalate their trauma in terms of detention and confinement, and to routinely separate children from their parents is extreme, inhumane and contrary to our core Christian values to welcome the stranger and safeguard the sanctity of the family. We call on the United States to eliminate these unjust policies immediately and to regulate its borders with justice and mercy.

“This is a system that employs violence and pain while ignoring the extreme pain, suffering and despair that forces people to flee their homes in the first place,” Lee said. “It ignores the terrifying reality of how far our enforcement system would have to go down this dark path to be worse than the violence driving people to our borders.”

These inhumane policies do not address the root causes of forced migration – violent conflict, repression, persecution, economic disparity in countries of origin, hunger – all of which are often reinforced by U.S. foreign policy. Rather, these policies invest in fear. It’s not only migrants’ lives, but the moral integrity of the United States that is at stake, as “zero tolerance” policies take the United States further down a morally twisted path.

*The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missionaries, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missionaries serve.*

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