A lone little boy holding a water bottle stands in the dirt next to a Border Patrol truck while the agent towering over him writes on a clipboard. Teenagers huddle together for warmth, trying to sleep under the constant glare of the fluorescent lights and the armed guards who watch through the glass. Young mothers cringe away from the darkened windows of a bus while protesters pound and rail about disease, criminality and violence, and news helicopters buzz above them. These images helped to turn a genuine humanitarian crisis into fodder for a culture war over immigration.

This year approximately 90,000 unaccompanied children, the vast majority from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, will be apprehended on the US-Mexico border, more than double the 38,000 who arrived last year, and nearly 20 times the long-term average of 5,000. More than one-quarter of these children are under the age of fourteen and nearly one-third are female.

According to a 2014 study by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 58% of these children are fleeing violence, and thus likely eligible for international protection. A similar UNHCR study published in 2006 found that only 13% of unaccompanied immigrant children then were likely eligible for international protection.

There’s tremendous variation in the kinds of violence that children are fleeing. Children have been extorted; witnessed murders; navigated the death and disappearance of their parents, friends and neighbors; and dealt with local governments co-opted by criminal gangs. Girls are fleeing forced relationships, rape and murder at the hands of gangsters who claim them as personal property. Boys are fleeing forced recruitment into gangs, police and paramilitary groups who falsely accuse them of gang membership and a host of other dangers associated with living on gang turf.

Many of the Guatemalan children, nearly half of whom are indigenous, have borne the brunt of a government crackdown against indigenous protests across the countryside over land and mineral rights.

At the broadest level, the region is suffering the after-effects of civil war and dictatorship. During the 1980s, US-backed counterinsurgency regimes were responsible for genocide in Guatemala, mass atrocities in El Salvador and a cocaine-fueled military dictatorship in Honduras. All sides mobilized child soldiers to fight in these conflicts on a large scale. They produced millions of refugees, and family separation became a tragic norm. Most of these refugees, however, were not recognized as such, particularly in...
It is the child’s responsibility to keep track of their immigration cases...

the United States, and after the peace accords in the 1990s, they faced mass deportations throughout the region. Meanwhile, postwar reconciliation and reconstruction were halting and piece-meal. The Central American population began a cycle of deportation and increasing dependence on the income that undocumented family members sent home from the United States.

Anti-gang laws, swelling prison populations and large-scale deportations led to the export of US-based street gangs to El Salvador, and later to Guatemala and Honduras. Regional governments pursued heavy-handed responses: increasing the punishments for gang membership, militarizing law enforcement and crowding out efforts to build a more sustainable peace.

The Mexican drug war added fuel to the fire. Money, weapons and armed criminals poured in. The civilian government in Honduras was toppled in a 2009 coup, and the murder rate shot up across the region, making many Central American cities as dangerous as Damascus or Kabul. The other tragic commonality is the treacherous journey through Mexico. After crossing the southern border and walking through remote areas, Central American migrants typically take a series of freight trains, known collectively as La Bestia, "The Beast," up the Gulf Coast, and the majority attempt to cross into the United States in the Rio Grande Valley.

Shutting down the main crossing points in southern Mexico has channeled migrants to more remote and dangerous routes—La Arrocera up the west coast and through the jungles of Tabasco in the east—just as shutting down major crossing points into the United States at El Paso and Tucson has funneled migrants to the deadly desert near El Altar to the west and the Rio Grande to the east.

Perhaps 50,000 Central Americans have disappeared in Mexico over the last decade—there’s no accurate count. According to a 2011 study by the Mexican Congress and Amnesty International estimate that 60-80% of migrant women and girls are sexually assaulted on their journey. Journalist Óscar Martínez, who spent two years riding the rails with Central American migrants, explains: “There is… an expression for the transformation of the migrant’s body: cuerpmático. The body becomes a credit card, a new platinum-edition ‘bodymatic’ which buys you a little safety, a little bit of cash and the assurance that your travel buddies won’t get killed.”

Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, unaccompanied immigrant children from Mexico are not entitled to a hearing before an immigration judge. The vast majority are quickly repatriated on the authority of law enforcement officers alone.

Central American children are referred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which keeps them in federal custody until they can be released to sponsors. The majority of the children have family in the United States, but they may not have seen them in years, and there’s little vetting of their new households. Meanwhile, the government pursues removal proceedings against all of the children. Thanks to a backlog of 400,000 cases, hearing dates are generally years in the future. It is the child’s responsibility to keep track of their immigration cases and to file change-of-venue forms if they move. Thanks to delays and bureaucracy, unaccompanied immigrant kids often miss their hearings and are ordered deported in absentia. If and when they are caught, they face a lifetime bar to immigration status in the US.

Most of these children disappear into the broader undocumented population. Many go to work in the fields, sometimes with their parents’ consent. Those who are sponsored by responsible adults seldom receive the education and counseling they need to overcome the trauma they’ve faced.

When private militias with assault rifles “patrol” the border, or mobs bang on the windows of buses full of women and children, we know where to point
the real danger is not vigilantism or mob violence. It’s the banal, bureaucratic transformation of human beings with dignity and rights into bodies to be contained and pushed through the system as efficiently as possible, and basic constitutional rights into hollow formalities. The responsibility for this transformation is much broader.

Some of it falls on the Obama administration, which has sent wildly mixed messages on undocumented immigration—lamenting the suffering and family separation caused by deportation in one breath and then advocating swift detention and deportation in the next.

But, responsibility runs deeper. Moving the entire immigration system under the mantle of “homeland security” in 2002 buried ordinary migrants and refugees under layers of bureaucracy and secrecy. In a system subject to very little public scrutiny, due process and access to justice have suffered.

Deeper still, there’s a basic tension between the Constitution, which applies to “persons,” and a growing body of law and policy which parses rights along the lines of citizenship and immigration status.

Witness the ad hoc detention center in Artesia, New Mexico, where 600 Central American mothers and their children are held. They are part of a separate population of 66,000 mothers and their minor children who have fled the same conditions as the unaccompanied children. Immigration lawyers representing the women and children detained in Artesia report that it functions with the physical and psychological constraints of a prison, but without checks and balances on the treatment of the detainees.

Their clients report a generalized lack of respect and mean-spirited, dehumanizing treatment. The guards insult them; it’s cold; and there’s insufficient food and medical care. There’s a “law library” with no books.

The guards complain that lawyers take too long in interviewing their clients and upset them. By upsetting them, they mean gathering the evidence necessary to sustain their immigration claims. This often entails having a complete stranger probe the intimate details of the violence that many of them are fleeing in a crowded room with armed guards looking on.

In these ad hoc facilities, rules seem to change every day. The government calls hearings with little prior notice, and detainees are routinely labeled “security threats” and denied bond in proceedings that wouldn’t pass muster in any other immigration court in the country.

The government has also set up so-called “rocket dockets,” where children and families are adjudicated in a matter of days, with little opportunity to gather evidence or build the trust necessary so that children are willing to reveal the kinds of details essential to their immigration claims.

Recently, Vice President Joe Biden declared: “These are our kids,” in a plea for providing legal representation to unaccompanied children from Central America. He suggested that most of these kids will not qualify for asylum or other forms of relief, and many will be deported, a claim which most immigration lawyers who have interviewed these kids dispute. But, he defended the integrity of judging each case on its merits alone.

Kids in particular need lawyers to discern what’s necessary to support a claim and gather the relevant evidence. Immigration judges much prefer to have a lawyer present to help translate a child’s perspective into the language of legal relief, and they’re more likely to act expeditiously in these cases.

A prompt screening by a competent immigration attorney would identify those likely eligible for asylum or for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and they could be routed away from the backlogged court system. In cases where children are not likely eligible for relief, their attorneys would advise them to ask for voluntary departure from the United States, and then help to ensure a safe and orderly repatriation.

Ensuring access to counsel will not bring peace and prosperity to Central America, nor will it resolve the culture wars over what it means to be an American. But it might bring a measure of justice and a sense of collective responsibility to a system in which they are sorely lacking.

Everard Meade, PhD is director of the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego, a leading source of research and public engagement on border issues for the last twenty years. Dr. Meade is an accomplished historian and frequent commentator on the relationship between the US, Mexico and Central America.
An Interview with the Statue of Liberty

by Gretchen Gundrum, PhD

In reflecting on the issues around immigration, A Matter of Spirit (AMOS) decided to go to the international expert on the subject, Lady Liberty, who has been welcoming exiles to American shores since 1886.

AMOS: Miss Liberty, you’ve seen millions of people from all over the world come into New York Harbor, seeking refuge. What has that been like for you?

Liberty: It has warmed my heart, inspired me to stand taller, hold my torch even higher and sing out my song of welcome—over and over again. Do you know those lyrics, from a sonnet by Emma Lazarus, set to music by Irving Berlin? The song goes:

Give me your tired, your poor
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

I am the symbol for the best of what America represents to all people—freedom—from poverty, from oppression, from want, from terror, from religious and political persecution. And not only freedom from, but freedom to—to live as human beings under a Declaration of Independence that acknowledges the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These shores have signified safe harbor for people of every nationality on the planet for over 200 years. In fact, the people of France gave me to you, so impressed were they by America’s commitment to liberty.

These shores have signified safe harbor for people of every nationality on the planet for over 200 years.

AMOS: What do you think about how things are going these days? Immigration reform seems stalled in the Congress more for political reasons than a sense of justice. Our country seems more intent on keeping people out rather than welcoming them in.

Liberty: Yes, I’ve felt particularly saddened about the children from Central America whose parents have been sending them up because of the dangers from violent crime. Things have to be terribly bad for a parent to decide give up a child. I’ve been ashamed that some government leaders have been fighting to send them away, back to danger and possible death. But the debate about who gets in, when, how many, and from what countries is really nothing new. During the history of American immigration there have often been migration surges and quotas; we do have to watch to keep from overloading the social welfare system when so many
An Undocumented Child’s Journey to the US

Luis Miguel knew he had to leave Guatemala when the MS-18 gang killed his uncle. Luis had dropped out of school at age 12 to work to support his family; that’s also when local gangs began threatening and beating him and his friends, pressuring them to join. He wanted to stay in Guatemala, but the coercion intensified, and he knew the gangs had no qualms about killing people.

At 16, he finally convinced his mother to let him leave. She took Luis Miguel and his sister, Anabel, to the Guatemala-Mexico border where they met their smuggler, a “coyote.” They hugged their mother goodbye and left.

Their journey to Texas took a month. It began at 4am, when they jumped aboard La Bestia—“The Beast”—a cargo train running north. They rode atop containers, holding on tightly. The train is notoriously dangerous; many have fallen. As the sun rose higher, the metal became almost too hot to touch. Luis Miguel remembers, “There were little children all around us, and they all began to cry.” They reached the Rio Grande late one night, crossed via inflatable raft and were told to run as fast as they could—for 5 hours.

After over a day with no water, lost in the desert, Luis Miguel and Anabel ran into Border Patrol. This resulted in weeks of detention in a freezing cold cell in Hidalgo, Texas and over a month in Houston before they were released to meet their brother in Connecticut. Once there, they found low bono lawyers who think Luis and Anabel have a good chance of qualifying for Special Juvenile Immigrant Status Visas, and are willing to help with the court proceedings.

Throughout the journey, the only thing Luis Miguel carried was his Bible. His favorite verse, Psalm 91, gave him strength to endure the journey: “You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.”
Family Detention: Denying Dignity

by Ashley Feasley

This past summer, images of young migrant children from Central America arriving on our Southwest border flooded nightly news shows and captured our national conscience. Young and unaccompanied, more than 66,000 of these children fleeing persecution and violence have sought refuge in the US since last October. While the influx of unaccompanied migrant children received extensive media coverage, what wasn’t captured by the major news media was that there was also an equal number of families migrating to the Southwest border during the same period. The families, primarily mothers with young children, were also arriving from Central America and fleeing targeted violence. But while many unaccompanied children have been reunified with families, the fate of the migrant families from Central America who came during the same time and for the same reasons has been much direr and less humane. Many of these families have been detained and have become the newest addition to the sprawling national immigrant detention industrial complex.

Since June, the government has been rapidly building family detention facilities at an astounding rate—going from less than 100 beds in May 2014 to an estimated 3,700 family detention beds by November. In July, I visited one family detention facility in Artesia, New Mexico. When I visited, the average age of children held inside Artesia was just six and one-half years old. As I toured the facility, I saw many young children and babies and heard concerns from mothers about their children’s and their own depression and weight loss.

Artesia is in a desert-like arid climate and landscape, and it was blistering hot the day I toured the facility. On the tour we encountered many small children playing in make-shift play areas and wandering around with their mothers. As we walked to the cafeteria, I saw a little girl, around two years old, wearing a bright pink and black sweater, sweating as the sun beat down upon her. When asked why she was wearing the sweater, her mother responded that it was the girl’s favorite possession, and she was worried it would be taken away from her if she took it off. The image of the overheated little girl wearing her favorite and likely only possession impressed upon me the amazing vulnerability and fragility of these children, and how entirely unsuited children are to live in prison-like detention facilities.

Immigrant Detention in the US Generally

While the United States is no stranger to large-scale immigrant detention, the increase in the use of it by the government in the last 13 years is remarkable. In fiscal year (FY) 2001, the now-defunct Immigration and Naturalization Service detained 204,459 people.¹ By FY 2011, the total number of persons detained by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency had risen to 429,247.² Today ICE holds 34,000 immigrants every day in a sprawling system of more than 250 immigration detention facilities, costing taxpayers nearly $2 billion each year.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 promulgated mandatory detention laws for certain immigrants and initiated a “get tough on undocumented immigration” era. Since 1996, immigrant detention has been increasingly implemented as a means to ensure that non-citizens appear for removal proceedings and do not disappear after a final order of removal has been issued. Starting around 2003, in an effort to keep up with the demand for immigrant detention beds, DHS began to rely upon a diverse set of facilities, such as local and state jails, for-profit prisons and federal prisons to house the growing numbers of immigrant detainees. The number of immigrant detention beds that must be maintained at all times—currently 34,000—is determined by Congressional appropriators.³ In recent years, the Obama administration has requested that Congress reduce this number, but those requests have been ignored.
Resurgence of Family Detention

While immigrant detention has been consistently used, the practice of detaining immigrant families was seldom-used by the Obama administration until this summer. In 2009, the Obama administration stopped detaining families in the T. Don Hutto Residential Facility, a 512-bed former state prison close to Austin, Texas, operated by the Corrections Corporation of America. Opened in 2006, Hutto was harshly criticized by advocates for its conditions and was the subject of a lawsuit by the ACLU. The Obama administration’s decision to stop sending families to Hutto represented a change in the government’s use of family detention. From 2009 until this summer, ICE only used one family detention facility, the Berks Family Residential Facility. Near Reading, Pennsylvania, Berks is a small-scale facility that has the capacity to detain approximately 80 individuals.

This summer, in response to the influx of immigrant families at the border, ICE rapidly expanded its family detention capacity from less than 100 beds in May 2014 to roughly 1,300 by mid-August 2014, and 3,700 by November. The Administration has requested funds to increase family detention bed space up to possibly 6,350 beds.

Problems with Family Detention

The aggressive build-up of family detention facilities in such a short time demonstrates the policy of using detention as a means of deterrence, and sadly reflects that family detention is here to stay—at least for the short-term. These policies go against international human rights law, child welfare principles and basic human dignity. Families, particularly children who have suffered trauma, should never be detained. It also goes against our own Catholic Social Teaching that such vulnerable and innocent women and children should be detained and treated so harshly. Pope Francis recently stated: “No cell is so isolated as to exclude the Lord, none. He is there... His paternal and maternal love reaches everywhere.”

Families, particularly children who have suffered trauma, should never be detained

Institutional confinement of children, especially those who have experienced harm, further traumatizes children, adversely affects their development and upends the parent-child relationship. In addition to concerns about facility conditions, there are access-to-justice concerns due to the remote location of Artesia and other similarly-located detention facilities. For example, Artesia is located on a Border Patrol training facility area at least three hours from El Paso or Albuquerque, the nearest metropolitan areas, and has been a challenging facility for lawyers to access clients. Furthermore, there are concerns about detained families’ ability to pursue international protection claims, such as asylum.

Family Detention and For-Profit Prison Operators

Additionally, the new family detention facilities are very expensive to operate. Immigration detention generally costs an average of $120 per day per bed. Detaining families could cost even more. With potential alternatives to detention programs costing significantly less than current detention facilities—on average $7-$45/day—the issue of why the government pays to maintain large-scale immigrant detention remains unanswered. But as ICE detains growing numbers of immigrant families and needs rapid construction of facilities, it continues to generate a lucrative opportunity for one industry: private prison operators. Corrections Corporation of America is the largest ICE detention contractor, operating a total of 15 ICE-contracted facilities with a total of 5,800 beds. GEO Group, Inc., the second largest ICE contractor, operates 7 facilities with a total of 7,183 beds and currently operates the Karnes family detention facility. These two companies have benefited the most from immigrant detention and stand to gain much from intensified use of family detention.

Conclusion

Bringing awareness to your local community on issues involving family detention and immigrant detention is necessary to counter the growing immigrant detention complex within the United States. Highlighting the link between immigrant detention and private prison operators also helps illustrate the weakness of the immigrant detention system and the need for change. Standing in solidarity with immigrant detainees and their families provides necessary and invaluable support to local communities torn apart by immigrant detention. In the end, it is necessary that we answer Matthew’s call and welcome the stranger into our homes, communities and parishes, and help to end family detention.

Family Detention Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Beds</th>
<th>Operated By</th>
<th>Opened/Converted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading, PA</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Immigration &amp; Customs Enforcement (ICE)</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artesia, NM</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>Immigration &amp; Customs Enforcement (ICE)</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnes, TX</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>GEO Group</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilley, TX</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

△ Ashley Feasley is an Adjunct Professor of Law at the Columbus School of Law at the Catholic University of America and is the Immigration Policy Advisor at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
EUROPE: Unprecedented pop. growth; social, political & religious conflict force many to migrate to economically & physically overburdened cities

US-MEXICAN WAR 1848: US annexes present-day California, Texas, Nevada, Utah & parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado & Wyoming. Mexican families in these lands suddenly become Americans.

ENGLAND: Unemployed escape crowded cities during slump in Industrial Revolution

CHINA: Civil war causes economic & political chaos

SCANDINAVIA: Low wages, crop failure, massive unemployment & religious restrictions

ITALY: Peasants’ lives worsened by heavy taxes, earthquakes, volcanoes, vineyard blight & political upheaval

POLED: Rebellion against Russian rule

RUSSIA: Persecution of Jews & peasants

EUROPE: Agricultural depression

IRELAND: Potato famine

GERMANY: Farmers & craftsmen suffer worsening economy & forced conscription

EUROPE: Serfdom ends everywhere in 1848, freeing peasants to migrate to cities & US

IRELAND: Potato famine

GERMANY: Farmers & craftsmen suffer worsening economy & forced conscription

US IMMIGRATION: TRENDS, EVENTS AND MIGRATION FACTORS

*Factors which drive people to leave country of origin.
‡Factors which attract people to US.

US: Chronic labor shortage. Cheap fertile land means most Americans own farms.Indentured servitude & slavery outlawed in the North

US-MEXICAN WAR 1848: US annexes present-day California, Texas, Nevada, Utah & parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado & Wyoming. Mexican families in these lands suddenly become Americans.

HOMESTEAD ACTS: Land given for little or no money for farming or required tree planting

CIVIL WAR: Ends slavery in US & fuels growth of new industries

ECONOMY: Panic of 1873

CALIFORNIA: Gold rush

US SUPREME COURT DECISION 1857: Declares slavery a federal responsibility & all state laws unconstitutional

US SUPREME COURT DECISION 1875: Declares immigration a federal responsibility & all state laws unconstitutional

TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD: Cheap labor needed to lay East-West tracks. Most dangerous jobs performed by Chinese who made up 80% of the workforce. Railroads offer bargain-priced land to encourage settlements & rail service

INDUSTRIAL BOOM: Cheap labor needed for burgeoning manufacturing industry

SPANISH AMERICAN WAR 1898

BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION ESTABLISHED 1891

US SHIPS: Exporting raw materials to Europe return with finished goods & immigrants

STEAMSHIPS: Cut trans-ocean travel time by 33%—80%

EXCLUDED: Single women not being met by a man, convicts, prostitutes & those monetarily assisted by others

EXCLUDED: Anarchists, epileptics, TB, physical or mental defects, unaccompanied children, polygamists & beggars

EXCLUDED: Single women not being met by a man, convicts, prostitutes & those monetarily assisted by others

CHINESE EXCLUSIONARY ACT: Suspends Chinese immigration & bars Chinese in US from citizenship

INCLUDED: Unlimited immigration from Western Hemisphere until 1965

Sources: Graph data from “Total Immigrants from Each Region and Country by Decade, 1820 – 2010”, http://tiny.cc/fvm0mx

Before 1790
Unprecedented pop. growth; continues in the South
But illegal African slave importation

US IMMIGRATION BY REGION AND DECADE
North
Americans own farms. land means most

INCLUDED:
worsening economy & forced conscription

GERMANY:
IRELAND:

Potato famine
Farmers & craftsmen suffer

Civil war causes

CHINA:

TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD:
Cheap labor needed

Bargain-priced land to encourage settlements & rail service
Chinese who made up 80% of the workforce. Railroads offer
to lay East-West tracks. Most dangerous jobs performed by

Unemployed escape
Industrial Revolution
crowded cities during slump in

farming or required tree
given for little or no money for

Land
in US & fuels growth of

CIVIL WAR:
Declares slave & free Africans non-citizens

SCANDINAVIA:
religious restrictions
massive unemployment &

EUROPE:
Agricultural depression
Single women not being met

Chinese in US from Citizenship

ESTABLISHED 1891
BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION

Persecution of
Rebellion against

POLAND:

WAR 1898
SPANISH AMERICAN

Industry
CANADA:
INCLUDED :
GERMANY, SPAIN &
ITALY:
Economic hardship conducive to fascist
dictatorships

SOUTHEAST ASIA : War
and Communist takeovers
cause flood of political
refugees

CUBA: Refugees flee
after Castro's Communist Revolution

NAFTA 1993: Bilateral trade agreement to
levy low or no tariffs along with US farm
subsidies result in displacement of Mexican
agricultural workers & increases undocumented
immigration. Similar agreement made with
Central American countries in 2004 (CAFTA-DR)

COLD WAR ENDS IN 1991

RUSSIAN JEWS: Receive
help from relief organizations to
resettle in US

ARMS:
Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

MEXICO: Revolution sends many peasants to US border

ARMENIANS:

CANADA: Industry
collapse leaves many unemployaed

GERMANY, SPAIN &
ITALY: Economic hardship conducive to fascist
dictatorships

NAFTA 1993: Bilateral trade agreement to
levy low or no tariffs along with US farm
subsidies result in displacement of Mexican
agricultural workers & increases undocumented
immigration. Similar agreement made with
Central American countries in 2004 (CAFTA-DR)

HONG KONG 1997: Returned to China after 154 years of British rule

MEXICO:
Revolution sends many peasants to US border

ARMS:
Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

ANCIENS: Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

MEXICO: Revolution sends many peasants to US border

ARMS:
Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

ANCIENS: Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

MEXICO: Revolution sends many peasants to US border

ARMS:
Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

ANCIENS: Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

MEXICO: Revolution sends many peasants to US border

ARMS:
Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

ANCIENS: Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)

MEXICO: Revolution sends many peasants to US border

ARMS:
Systematically killed by
Turks (1st Genocide of 20th Century)
A Cry for Peace

by Zerene Haddad

Do you think a Syrian life has less value than anyone else’s?

The question came from my Syrian friend as we drank our morning coffee in a still sleepy Beirut, Lebanon. Her wide eyes seemed to brim with questions, anxiety and anger. She left Syria one year ago, under threat for her political opinions, and has been living an uneasy existence in Lebanon since then.

It was the day that the United States had declared that they would conduct air strikes against the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq. The rhetoric being used in the media was that IS was too big of a threat to ignore, they needed to be stopped and they were a threat to the world.

To an outsider, the Islamic State seemed to appear from nowhere. But Syrians in the east and north of Syria have been suffering under IS rule for almost 16 months. The IS constitutes their most recent enemy in a conflict that has resolutely soldiered on for nearly 4 full years, leaving more than 191,000 dead and millions displaced within Syria, in neighboring countries and beyond.

As for my friend, her disappointment was palpable: “No one has come to save Syrians from IS, or from anyone else. We’ve been dying for four years, but we aren’t worth saving; no one cares for us.”

Her statement echoes the sentiment of the majority of Syrians who feel abandoned by the international community and are desperate for this war to end. No matter what political or military arguments we make, at present, it fails to change the reality of the suffering of civilians who have borne the brunt of this war physically and psychologically.

At times, it seems hard to recall the exact moment when the conflict in Syria began; four years seem like a lifetime when each hour of a day is measured out in bullets, mortars, barrel bombs and drones. Demonstrations by civilians demanding governmental reforms that centered around ideals such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and more political diversity sparked the conflict initially in March 2011. However, within six months it transformed into violence on both sides. Now the opposition is a motley collection of different groups, and everyone fights each other: allies one day, enemies the next.

As a Syrian who has lived here in the midst of this chaos for four years, even I am confused. Daily alliances are changing, names are changing, there are speeches and conferences abroad, but the reality is the same: violence, violence and more violence. We—the civilians—are the ones who suffer,” says Samer (name changed for safety) a Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) volunteer in Syria.

The figures speak for themselves: 9 million Syrians internally displaced and 3 million registered refugees in neighboring countries, of whom more than 50% are women and children. There are countless others who are not registered nor accounted for—the dead, the imprisoned, the disappeared, those who have emigrated legally and those who have buried themselves in freezer trucks or risked their lives in dinghies crossing the Mediterranean to seek asylum in Europe—and the numbers keep growing.

There was a time, less than five years ago, when Syrians used to welcome Iraqi refugees into their country, offering them solace and a new home: a place to rebuild. Now it is hard to keep
track as Syrians and Iraqis cross and re-cross the border multiple times, fleeing from continuous violence on both sides of the border that targets civilian populations.

One family can be displaced many times, as they are constantly on the move trying to evade violence. As territorial borders and alliances change on a weekly basis, the conflict also morphs and travels from area to another. Understanding the war is complex; many international, regional, religious, ethnic, socio-political and economic factors are fueling it, making a solution seem far from anyone’s reach. Since Geneva II—the peace talks among the government, opposition and international supporters earlier this year—stalled, there has been no more talk of negotiations, but rather an escalation of violence.

The primary responders to the humanitarian tragedy in Syria have been predominantly civilian networks. These networks are groups ranging from just a few to 20 or more people from a variety of backgrounds who work to provide humanitarian aid, human rights protection, information gathering and event documentation. Spurred to action by the circumstances they find themselves in, Syrians from all walks of life have responded through impartial, non-violent action.

“I never thought I would do this kind of work—I’m a pharmacist by profession; now I’m in charge of distributing food baskets and hygiene kits to thousands of displaced families who have lost everything. We all (Syrians) know the shock of fleeing your home, the constant fear of some random attack. Death is with us every moment of every day,” explains Samer.

Likewise, Iraqis are no strangers to conflict; to date there has been just over ten years of strife since 2003, and two Gulf Wars prior to that. But this summer alone, one million Iraqis were internally displaced by the violence that accompanied the establishment of the Islamic State.

I spoke with an Iraqi friend who had sought refuge in Syria years ago and now finds herself looking again for a safe place for her family. “We are just so tired; it’s time to leave and never come back. There is nothing more for us, nothing more for our children. I want my children to grow up away from this madness.” Her tone was weary, resigned to a fate that she never wanted, and certainly did not choose.

Tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians and Yazidis, both minorities, are seeking safety in Erbil, Kurdistan. They are sleeping in the yards of churches, mosques, schools, abandoned buildings, streets and public areas. Those who are lucky have tents; others are exposed to the elements. Local communities have responded with open arms, but the experience of Syria has taught us that the burden cannot be left to host communities indefinitely.

Moreover, people cannot be left outdoors in temporary accommodation; the seasons are changing, and in Syria and Iraq, winter is bitterly cold. Kurdistan has delayed the start of public school by one month so that the people sheltering in schools can have a safe-haven for a while longer while authorities and aid agencies decide what to do with displaced people. But these measures are not solutions to what is likely going to be a long-term problem. The US should lead in helping share the burden of refugees in neighboring countries by increasing resettlement quotas and supporting independent civil society initiatives inside both Syria and Iraq. The European community should be working to ensure a safer passage to Europe for those who are fleeing and seeking asylum, as well as for some European states to share the burden of resettlement too.

At JRS, our projects in Syria help communities resist and survive the war that threatens to overwhelm and destroy them. The conflict has also caused the near collapse of the economy, as well as a brain drain and the mass exodus of many middle-class families.

“We have to give our support to people who are doing their best to resist the senseless violence of war,” says Nawras Sammour, S.J., JRS Middle East and North Africa Director. Fr. Sammour is Syrian and lives in Damascus, where he oversees projects across the country that provide emergency relief, food, rent support and psychosocial support to 300,000 Syrians a year.

Within Syria there has been a dramatic reduction of essential servic-
es and an exponential rise in poverty rates. This poverty cuts across the many cultural, religious and ethnic communities in Syria. As such, we serve all marginalized groups—be they Sunnis, Shi'a (including Alawites), Druze, or Christians. In this way, inter-religious dialogue remains part-and-parcel of our daily activities.

The landscape of the conflict is changing at a rapid rate, both on an international and regional level. It is undeniable that in August, a foreign military intervention was crucial in allowing humanitarian agencies to provide relief to affected civilian populations. The American military and the Kurdish Peshmerga forces fought back IS and opened a humanitarian corridor from Mt. Sinjar, allowing tens of thousands of Yazidi civilians to flee across the border first into Syria, then double back into Kurdistan, circumventing IS forces. Will this joint action shape future strategy in the region, and what does this mean for humanitarian aid to civilians in besieged areas?

While coordination between JRS, Jesuit networks, Christian and Muslim entities and secular organizations help civilians receive much needed support, this assistance is not sufficient to meet the escalating needs. By and large, the international community has not adequately supported Syrian groups engaged in humanitarian initiatives, a process that needs to be reversed.

Pope Francis said earlier this year while visiting the region, “Peace must be looked for and built together through small actions every day.” These words capture the profound longing for peace from the people of the Middle East and is the message that JRS staff, their families and local communities wish to send to the international community.

Zerene Haddad is the Regional Advocacy & Communications Officer for JRS Middle East and North Africa.

Kino Border Initiative

KBI is a collaborative Jesuit migrant ministry with bi-national partnerships founded in 2009. Kino respects the God-given dignity of the human person and responds to the most critical needs of migrants. The programs serving migrants in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico fosters bi-national solidarity through:

- Humanitarian Aid
- Education & Research
- Advocacy

Nazareth House, a KBI program run by the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist, serves women and children who have been deported by the United States to Mexico. The shelter, located just a few hundred yards from the Mariposa Gate border crossing, provides support for unaccompanied women and children who are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Volunteer and support opportunities: Kinoborderinitiative.org
Comprehensive Immigration Reform: At a Tipping Point?

- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can ask police departments to hold individuals—even those without criminal convictions—up to 48 hours, so that ICE can investigate their immigration status. In April, an Oregon court ruled that a woman’s civil rights were violated when she was jailed by an ICE detainer. This ruling and a letter writing campaign led to 3 states and over 220 counties and cities deciding that they will not honor ICE detainers unless they are signed by a judge.

- A Southern California court ruled that immigration authorities had to stop coercing immigrants into signing a “Voluntary Return” document.

- Over 100 diverse faith leaders committed civil disobedience in front of the White House in July 2014 to protest continued mass deportations and failed efforts at comprehensive immigration reform. These people of faith brought their voices to the public square on behalf of people living in fear of deportation and family separation.

- Detainees at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington—a private prison run by GEO Group—participated in a 56-day hunger strike, protesting detention center conditions, the unfair deportation policies, and the 2009 law mandating a 34,000 nightly bed quota. Detainees in a GEO Group-run detention center in Texas joined the hunger strike.

- Advocacy, public demonstrations and prayer are creating a movement toward the tipping point for immigration reform!

Immigration Reform in Congress Stalled

June 15, 2012: President Obama creates Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a new policy for “Dreamers.”

November 8, 2012: John Boehner names creating solutions to the immigration system as important for the House of Representatives.

January 28, 2013: The Gang of 8 (a bi-partisan group of Senators) introduce their immigration principles.


November 13, 2013: John Boehner says he will not bring the Senate Bill to the House floor.

March 26, 2014: House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi introduces a discharge petition to force a vote on comprehensive immigration reform. It does not get the required signatures to move forward.

June 30, 2014: President Obama announces that he will take executive action to “fix the immigration system.”

Summer 2014: Tens of thousands of children, fleeing violence, travel from Mexico and Central America to the United States.

September 6, 2014: Obama declares he will wait until after the November elections to take executive action.

September 30, 2014: President Obama approves a plan to open processing centers in Central American countries to allow children to apply for refugee status from their country of origin.

Immigration Reform Principles


1. Earned Legalization
2. Future Worker Program
3. Family-Based Reform
4. Restoration of Due Process Rights
5. Root Causes of Migration Addressed
6. Enforcement

Power of ONE
Write to Congress for immigration reform!
www.ipjc.org
Justice Circles

Seattle Climate Change March

Annual Meeting Hosted by NWCRI

Connell, WA Leadership Training

IPJC at the Seattle Climate Change March, Sept 21, 2014

Western Washington Leadership Training Participants

Cathy Rowan and Sr. Judy Byron, OP

Cathy Rowan, representing the Maryknoll Sisters, and Sr. Judy, Director of our Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment (NWCRI), give a global health report at the Annual General Meeting of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

JOIN AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF YOUNG ADULTS ACTING FOR JUSTICE!

Community Building - Justice - Spirituality

JOIN US!

FACEBOOK.COM/IPJCJUSTICECAFE

Justice Café

2014-2015 Topics

October—Immigration: Borders, Boundaries & Compassion

November—Supply Chains: Who Made My Stuff?

January—Upholding the Dignity of Work: Creating a Just Economic System

February—Life on Purpose: Contemplation & Justice

March—Climate Change: Our Future with Earth

April—Act for Eco-Justice!
Contemplative Dialogue Circles
A new six-session process on contemplation, dialogue and transformation. The process provides an opportunity for those with differing perspectives and world views to build community.

- Contemplation
- Contemplative Listening
- Reflective Dialogue
- Engaging Contemplative Dialogue
- Personal & Communal Transformation

Climate Change: Our Call to Conversion
Climate Change: Our Call to Conversion
A Four-Session Process for Faith Communities
Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
flickr.com/©Phillip Roberts
Form a group and use our new 4-session booklets!
- Our Earth Community
- The Science of Climate Change: Call to Change Course
- Ecological Conversion
- Eco-Imagining Our Emerging Future

Human Trafficking Workshops
Our Hope to End Modern Day Slavery
Church
- Discover the who, how & where of Human Trafficking
- Explore Catholic Social Teaching & Scripture
- Examine the current situation & structural issues
- Receive practical tools and resources for action
- Reflect and pray as a community
School
- Live Jr. High School webinars with multi-school interaction
- High school and University workshops available
Contact IPJC to schedule a workshop today!

Save the Dates!
November 1st — Dialogue for Justice, Seattle
November 8th — Dialogue for Justice, Olympia
March 7th, 2015 — New Consciousness: Becoming Agents of Cultural Change with Pat Kozak, CSJ
March 26th, 2015 — Church Advocacy Day
Call IPJC to schedule:
- Justice Circles for Spanish or English speaking low-income women
- Justice Cafés for Young Adults

United Way & Matching Donations
- Please consider writing the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center on your United Way pledge card
- Does your company have a corporate matching program? Remember IPJC!
This Issue: Immigration & Refugees

SPONSORING COMMUNITIES
Adrian Dominican Sisters
Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace
Oregon Province Jesuits
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S. Ontario Province
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Tacoma Dominicans

AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES
Benedictine Sisters of Cottonwood, Idaho
Benedictine Sisters of Lacey
Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel
Dominican Sisters of San Rafael
Religious of the Sacred Heart
Sinsinawa Dominicans
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon
Society of the Holy Child Jesus
Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union

EDITORIAL BOARD
Timnit Ghermay
Gretchen Gundrum
Linda Haydock, SNJM
Vince Herberholt
Tom Hulscher
Nick Mele
Susan Wells, SNJM
Editor: Annapatrice Clarke
Layout: Justin Almeida

Footnotes online at www.ipjc.org

Call to Action

Churches
- Integrate immigration and refugee issues in the sacramental life of the parish: homilies; RCIA, youth and adult faith formation; service programs
- Host an immigration film and discussion event
- Create a citizenship mentoring program
- Organize an immersion experience to meet local farm workers or experience a border town
- Hold a parish immigrant story-telling event for everyone to share their ancestry
- Participate in or support English language learners by offering ESL classes
- Contact local faith-based charity groups like Catholic Charities
- Link immigrants to pro bono legal services
- Print advocacy alerts and Catholic Social Teaching in the bulletin
- Designate a “Faithful Citizen Sunday” for education and letter writing
- Participate in detention visitation programs—www.detentionwatchnetwork.org

Individual
- Consider being a foster parent for unaccompanied minors
- Be trained to assist young people with the Deferred Action Childhood Arrival (DACA) applications
- Participate in faith-based state advocacy days
- Write to federal legislators to support comprehensive immigration reform at www.ipjc.org
- Purchase Fair Trade goods and services and participate in socially responsible investing
- Gather friends and family to watch and discuss a film on immigration
- Volunteer at an organization that is providing direct service to immigrants and refugees or addressing policy change

Go to www.ipjc.org for immigration resources, links, education & action!