



Where Justice and Truth Meet

July 2014

“As Dominican women we claim our power to nurture mutual relationships that offer healing and courage to a broken world.”

Together – Birthing Anew, Chapter 2014

The Flight of Unaccompanied Children to the U.S.: why are so many children making the dangerous journey north?

The *Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)* sent a delegation to southern Mexico and Central America to examine and understand the plight of children fleeing to the U.S. in record numbers.



The [USCCB report](#) uncovers the reasons for the growing number of child immigrants at the U.S./Mexico border. Violence that has permeated all aspects of life in Central America is one of the

primary factors driving migration from the region. Countries of origin lack the capacity to protect children adequately, citing domestic violence, gangs and criminal elements active in communities and schools. Many of the young migrants have valid asylum claims, but those who manage to flee the violence are exposed to extreme danger on the migration journey.

The numbers of unaccompanied and separated children arriving in the United States has doubled each year since 2011. The US government estimates that more than 90,000 unaccompanied children will arrive by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2014, and upwards of 127,000 during FY 2015. Initially, the majority of children making the dangerous journey to the United States were boys. However, an increase in gender-based violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America (Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala) has forced a growing number of girls to undertake the dangerous journey. The LCWR has written a [public letter to Congress](#) on the growing humanitarian crisis of families with children and children traveling alone arriving on our border that demands compassionate responses to the

immediate need and pragmatic policies that address the root causes of the crisis.

Our immediate concern must be to ensure that the needs and rights of children and families fleeing violence and persecution are respected. Child

“We pray for a heart which will embrace immigrants. God will judge us on how we have treated the most needy.”

Pope Francis

welfare advocates are adamant about the need to provide refugee children with care that meets the best interest of each child. We join them in calling on Congress and the administration to ensure their protection and care:

- *Increase funding levels to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which are currently inadequate to meet the expanding need.*
- *Ensure that unaccompanied children are treated in a way that reflects their unique vulnerabilities;*
- *Support efforts to reintegrate those children that return to their home countries;*
- *Improve the trafficking screening training and protocols along the border;*
- *Place children in community-based care, NGO child welfare shelters, and other settings reflecting the needs of each child;*
- *Require that all children released from federal custody receive follow-up services to ensure their safety and well-being.*
- *Provide legal representation for all unaccompanied migrant children.*
- *Remove barriers to access services for all vulnerable migrant children granted immigration status.*



We know that the humanitarian response is not going to end forced migration. We call upon Congress and the administration to address the root causes of forced migration and to join with the international community and partners in the Americas to fashion a regional response to what is clearly a regional crisis. 1) Invest in local violence-prevention and development efforts including education and job creation plans, and empowerment programs for women and girls; 2) Address the unintended consequences of US foreign policy that contribute to rising violence and poverty in the region including: US trade policy; the war on drugs; training and support of local security forces; 3) End support for governments that engage in human rights violations, including illegal land grabs, and the persecution of indigenous and grassroots leaders; 4) Fix the broken US immigration policy that continues to separate families, disempower parents, and make children vulnerable.

Besides urging our government to action, what more can we do?



Hospitality and accompaniment take many forms, and immigrant families have both immediate and long term needs. The Department of Homeland

Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is processing an unprecedented number of families along the U.S. border, and the conditions of these temporary facilities are lacking in even the most basic services and conditions. Those families who have relatives in the U.S. are being released; but they must make their own way to their relatives.

If you are near the border, consider reaching out to your local Catholic Charities; material donations like clothing, hygiene products, food, and cash for bus tickets are needed. Volunteers are also needed to distribute the goods.

ICE intends to detain those families who do not have relatives in the U.S. while they wait for their immigration hearings or pass preliminary asylum finding (Credible Fear). The USCCB is asking Catholic and faith-based organizations to host needy families, so that they are not detained.

Possibilities include:

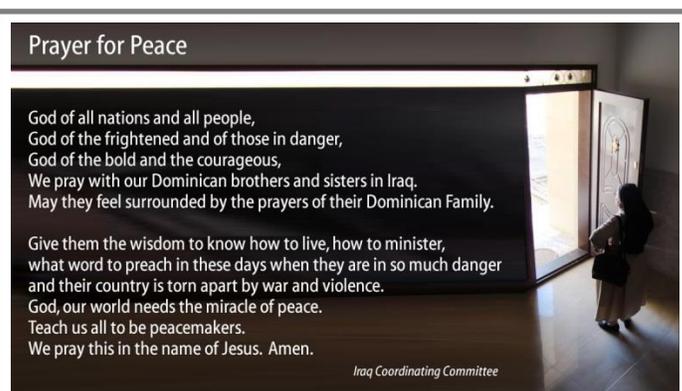
Community Living: Could one or more families live in community with you? Is there a long-term shelter or transitional-living program that one or more of these families would be able to join?

Individual Family Hosting: Are there individual families in your network willing to host a single family in their home? Could other members of your network help with financial or material support to the host family?

Financial Support for Independent or Group Living: Could your organization or network provide housing to one or more of these families in an existing residential property or through rental of housing?

Financial Support, Material and In-Kind Donations: Perhaps you cannot provide housing, but others in your community can; could you assist in meeting the material needs of the families?

For details: [Hospitality and Accompaniment resources](#)



Stop Calling the Iraq War a “Mistake”

Former congressman Dennis Kucinich of Ohio [writes](#) that the “mistake” language so often used by politicians and the media now, in the wake of a deepening spiral of violence in Iraq, “is the language of denial, not contrition: it minimizes the Iraq War’s disastrous consequences, removes blame, and deprives Americans of any chance to learn from our generation’s foreign policy disaster.” He goes on to suggest what he believes is needed to begin to address our role: to tell the truth about Iraq and the false scenario that caused us to go to war; and to stop focusing media attention on fanning the flames of war but rather to recognize that in this case, “more problems were created by military intervention than solved.”

David Krieger, founder and president of the [Nuclear Age Peace Foundation](#) notes that “the failure of militarism to accomplish any reasonable end, compounded by the terrible and predictable loss of life, is a strong argument for pursuing peace by peaceful means.”