

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
Washington D.C. 20006

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Kamala Harris
Vice President of the United States
Washington D.C. 20006

The Honorable Anthony Blinken
Secretary of State
Washington D.C. 20520

January 23, 2023

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

As 165 faith-based organizations and congregations across traditions, we write with grave concern about the forthcoming Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that will set in motion an asylum ban in the form of a rule that bars people from asylum if they enter without inspection or do not seek protection in countries of transit. While we recognize your announcement included an action to expand limited pathways to Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans for humanitarian reasons, the parole process is not an equivalent substitute for access to asylum — nor should it ever be coupled with an expansion of harmful anti-asylum policies like Title 42. The United States has a long history of providing safety for those fleeing violence and persecution in their homelands. We urge you to not issue the proposed NPRM and to instead work vigorously across your administration to ensure that people seeking safety have access to a fair, dignified and efficient asylum process.

We recognize that there are real challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border and the U.S. asylum system is in dire need of meaningful reform. This must be met with a moral and human-centered response. Across faith traditions and practices, the message is clear: We are called by our sacred texts and faith principles to approach one another with love—not fear. Our diverse faith traditions compel us to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner—regardless of place of birth, religion, or ethnicity. Importantly, our faiths also urge us to boldly resist and dismantle systems of oppression. Implementation of the new rule will not only be ineffective, but also harmful, inhumane, and deadly for the most vulnerable. Rooted and renewed in our collective faith teachings and values, we are called to ensure that our laws promote and protect the dignity of each individual. This means critically addressing unjust and oppressive public policies and their negative impacts on human lives.

The NPRM was announced in conjunction with a limited expansion of the temporary parole process for humanitarian reasons to Haitians, Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans living abroad. Yet for many, migrating is not a choice, but a matter of survival. As evidenced by similar versions of an asylum transit ban under the Trump administration, curtailing access to asylum leads to serious human consequences and violates our moral and legal obligations to those fleeing violence and persecution. President Trump's asylum transit ban [led to](#) asylum denials and prolonged detention for many with *bona fide* claims, as well as family separations, permanent limbo, and elimination of a pathway to citizenship for refugees barred from asylum and granted only the inadequate protection of [withholding of removal](#). The Trump administration issued a similar rule in December 2020, and then was [blocked](#) by a U.S. District Court judge in February 2021. The court determined that the Trump administration's rule was inconsistent with existing asylum law and increased the risk that asylum applicants would be subject to violence. Following in these flawed footsteps leads the U.S. further down a dangerous path that wrongfully places the emphasis on punitive measures, deterrence, detention, and deportation rather than meaningful access to protection.

In addition, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [warned](#) that linking safe pathways with the curtailment of access to asylum is inconsistent with refugee law, stressing that "such initiatives...cannot come at the expense of the fundamental human right to seek asylum." Furthermore, these actions contradict a clear commitment under the [Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection](#) to "protecting the safety and dignity of all migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons, regardless of their migratory status."

Many of our congregations, synagogues, and mosques have encouraged us with their accompaniment of refugees and asylum seekers. They have faithfully provided assistance, temporary shelter, food and basic necessities, as well as support navigating U.S. culture and systems. We are sustained by their encouragement and the opportunity to live out our faith principles. Their deep involvement and commitment is also a demonstration of the public support for ensuring asylum seekers have access to a dignified welcome. Nearly three-quarters of Americans ([73.4%](#)) agree that the United States should provide access to the U.S. asylum system to people fleeing persecution and/or violence, according to a recent poll conducted by the U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC) at the University of California, San Diego.

As representatives from the faith community, we denounce any policy that prevents or curtails access to the right to seek protection for asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations. President Biden boldly proclaimed during his campaign that, "We're going to restore our moral standing in the world and our historic role as a safe haven for

refugees and asylum-seekers." Words are just words until they are followed by substantive and meaningful action. We urge your administration to withdraw any asylum ban (including an asylum transit ban) from consideration, and instead live out our moral call to restore asylum protections and care for those fleeing oppression and persecution.

Sincerely,

International

American Friends Service Committee
Bethany Christian Services
Church World Service
Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids
Frailes Capuchinos de Puerto Rico
General Board of Global Ministries of the UMC
HIAS
Hindus for Human Rights
Hope Border Institute
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Kino Border Initiative
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth
Quixote Center
Refugee JumpStart
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur USA
Sisters of Providence
Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate
Sisters of the Presentation, New Windsor, NY
Society of Helpers
The Episcopal Church of the 3Saints, John, Paul + Clement
The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society
UMC Rapid Response Team

National

African American Ministers In Action
Anti-Defamation League
B'nai Beshurun
Bridges Faith Initiatives

Casa Esther Catholic Worker
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Center for Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul USA
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith Commons
Franciscan Action Network
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Marianist Social Justice
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Missionary Oblates
MPower Change
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
Rapid Response Immigration Team
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province
Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of Providence
Sisters of Providence Leadership Team
Sisters of St. Agnes associate Fond du Lac, WI
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa
Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, IN
The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes and the CSA Associate Community
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

United Church of Christ
United Church of Christ Justice and Local Church Ministries
Uri L'Tzedek

State & Local

Guadalupe Presbyterian Church, USA, Arizona
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Arizona (LAMA), Arizona
Southside Presbyterian Church, Arizona
Good Shepherd, Arkansas
Temple Beth El of South Orange County, California
Sisters of Mercy Solidarity Committee, California
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN), California
National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Long Beach & West Orange County (CA), California
CLUE-Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, California
Immaculate Heart Community Commission on Immigration, Refugees, Indigenous Peoples, California
Jewish Coalition Assisting Refugees & Immigrants - Los Angeles, California
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA, California
Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship, California
Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugees & Jewish Justice Advocates of Temple Beth El of South Orange County, California
First Congregational Church of SanJose, California
First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Connecticut
Congregation Action Network, District of Columbia
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA), District of Columbia
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC, District of Columbia
Congregation Bet Haverim, Georgia
New Sanctuary Movement of Atlanta, Georgia
First Friends, Asbury Memorial Church, Georgia
Chicago Jewish Coalition for Refugees, Illinois
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America-CRLN, Illinois
Sanctuary Now!, Illinois
Makom Solel Lakeside, Illinois
Grace UMC, Iowa
Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, KS, Kansas
Delaware-Maryland Synod, ELCA, Maryland
Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, Maryland
Immigrant Justice Ministry Team of Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Maryland

Baltimore Washington Conference, The United Methodist Church, Maryland
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western MA, Massachusetts
Jewish Community of Amherst, Tikkun Olam Committee, Massachusetts
Congregation B'nai Israel, Northampton, Massachusetts
Congregation B'nai Israel Tikkun Olam Committee, Massachusetts
New England Synod ELCA Immigration Task Force, Massachusetts
STRANGERS NO LONGER (Michigan), Michigan
Valley Community Presbyterian Church, Minnesota
Mayflower Immigrant Team, Minnesota
Congregation Kol Ami-KC, Missouri
Peace with Justice Ministries, Great Plains Conference United Methodist Church,
Nebraska
Caldwell Sisters of St. Dominic, New Jersey
Glen Rock Jewish Center, New Jersey
Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, New Jersey
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center, New Jersey
Pax Christi New Jersey, New Jersey
Interfaith Campaign for Just Closures, New Jersey
Faith in New Jersey, New Jersey
St. Peter the Apostle Roman Catholic Church, New Jersey
First Congregational United Church of Christ, New Mexico
Long Island Immigration Clinic/Sisters of St. Joseph, New York
Brooklyn Heights Synagogue Social Justice Committee, New York
Kolot Chayeinu, New York
St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church, New York
Brotherhood Synagogue, New York
Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, New York
Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York
East End Temple - Congregation El Emet, New York
SAJ -Judaism That Stands for All, New York
Shalom Friends Immigration Detention Visitation, New York
Synagogue Coalition on the Refugee and Immigration Crisis, New York
The Shul of New York, New York
Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST), New York
Downtown United Presbyterian Church, New York
the Justice League of the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, New York
Church Women United in New York State, New York
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, New York
One to One Learning, New York
Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration (WJCI), New York

Social Action Committee Beth Meyer Synagogue, North Carolina
Temple Shalom, Ohio
Bridgeport United Church of Christ, Oregon
First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Oregon
Havurah Shalom, Oregon
Social Justice Coalition, Central Lutheran, Oregon
Tikkun Olam Committee of P'nai Or of Portland, Oregon
Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Pennsylvania
New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh Area Pax Christi, Pennsylvania
St. Mary Magdalene Parish Social Justice and Peace Committee, Pennsylvania
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Lowcountry, South Carolina
Pax Christi Austin, Texas
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX), Texas
Midway Hills Christian Church, Texas
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, Texas
North Texas Conference Board of Church and Society, Texas
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio, Texas
Second Congregational Church UCC, Vermont
NOVA Friends of Refugees, Virginia
Church Council of Greater Seattle, Washington
MCC Sanctuary Committee, Wisconsin
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, Wisconsin