

## It's Not Just Migrants, It's the Sovereignty and Fraternity of the Central American Peoples

On this September 29, which the Catholic Church and affiliated organizations celebrate as World Migrants and Refugees Day, the following organizations offer this statement to public opinion and public authorities:

Since the month of June, the United States has pressured Mexico to be a "Safe Third Country" in order to impede citizens of Guatemala from reaching the United States, and then pressured Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Panama to change their migration policies. In the last decades we have not seen such a crushing intervention, not only using diplomacy but economic blackmail: threats of tariffs on our products, and taxes on remittances.

Nor have we seen a such a servile and humiliating response from our governments who compete to see who can better obey Donald Trump. The president of El Salvador requested from the United States different treatment than Honduras and Guatemala, and on September 12 deployed 1,100 border patrol to stop migration, funded by the United States.

In June, the government of Guatemala offered the Trump administration the possibility of allowing North American troops to control the borders of Guatemala. On June 26, the government then signed a dishonorable migration agreement, which in the United States is called "Safe Third Country," and in Guatemala is called by a different name to disguise its impact. It is an agreement whose content was hidden from Congress, the future president, and the office of the United Nations in charge of these matters, such as UNHCR, in a mockery of our people and our sovereignty. For their part, Honduras announced an agreement of this kind, despite the fact that their president is being charged by judges of the United States as a collaborator in drug trafficking. Donald Trump supports corrupt governments in exchange for their supporting these migration policies of detention. THE WALL IS BEING BUILT IN OUR OWN COUNTRIES.

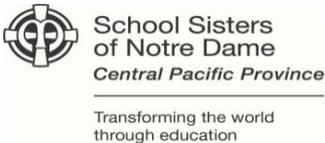
The most serious thing is the division which has been fomented among our peoples when they blame violence on migrants of the neighboring country, identifying them with delinquents, or when they try to end the Central American Border Control Agreement (CA-4) with Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. The government ministry of Guatemala, in an interview with *The Washington Post* on June 5, affirmed that they are working with lawyers from the Department of National Security of the United States in order to revise this agreement and say that "the caravans are a criminal form of mobilization."



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**For all these reasons we manifest our resounding rejection of:**

The agreements that were signed with the United States, even though they are not called “Safe Third Country,” that **criminalize migrants** who come from sister countries.

The growing **manipulation** that the governments have made with the trafficking of persons to provide a rationale for their struggle against migration. They want to make the **right to migrate** into a crime in order to justify their focus on security and forget the focus on human rights that this phenomenon requires.

The confusion created between migration and refuge in the agreements being signed. The growing **need of refuge** for the victims of generalized violence in Central America requires complying with the international conventions ratified by our countries.

The growing **militarization** financed by the United States in order to once again rely on the army to repress citizens. The state of siege decreed in 22 Guatemalan municipalities and the militarization of the borders will not resolve the problems of drug trafficking and corruption in which military and political authorities have been implicated on multiple occasions.

The **businessmen** who put their interests ahead of ethics and humanism, pronouncing in favor of these policies with the United States. We know what kind of country they want when at the same time they demand lowering the minimum wage. In a diabolical logic of free competition, if they close the borders the workers will have no other option than to accept smaller salaries.

We call on the peoples of Central America to not only **protest together on September 29** but to work for a truly Central American unity, putting an end to a corrupt, servile, unpatriotic political system.

Hopefully, we can celebrate in 2021 the 200 years of independence of our peoples with a renewed sense of FRATERNITY which the migrants offer us, by tearing down borders and walls.

September 29, 2019

World Migrants and Refugees Day



Serpaj



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