Catholic Organizations Urge the U.S. Government to Promote the Safety and Rights of Asylum Seekers as Title 42 Ends

As Catholic organizations serving asylum seekers and people seeking safety, we urge the U.S. to promote the safety and rights of asylum seekers as Title 42 ends.

Today, we mark the termination of Title 42, a policy that critically limited or denied access to asylum for thousands of individuals and families seeking refuge and protection. But with the end of Title 42, we are appalled by the continuation of asylum restrictions through different measures enacted and proposed both by the Biden Administration and Congress. With the new rules and proposed congressional policies the U.S. government is changing the asylum system as we knew it since 1980 and is failing to improve and provide protection to people seeking safety in a just and humane manner. Despite the government’s previous promises to protect the right to seek asylum, the new measures make asylum seekers pay the ultimate price.

We are deeply concerned by the Administration’s announcement yesterday that the Title 42 expulsion policy will be replaced by the final asylum ban rule. This rule will further restrict access to asylum by requiring individuals to first seek asylum in another country before coming to the U.S. It also includes extremely limited exceptions that will place many individuals and families in dangerous and life-threatening situations.

The Administration will continue to require that asylum seekers apply through CBP One application, a process that limits access to asylum due to its language, technical glitches and requirement that individuals have a smartphone in order to seek protection. We also fear the use of Title 8 paired together with the new policy on credible fear interviews in CBP custody and other rushed processes of adjudication, will gut due process for immigrants all together.

The Administration’s announcement that 1,500 additional troops will be sent to the border raises additional concerns. We fear that further militarization of the border may compromise the safety and rights of those seeking safety and traumatize communities who live at the border.

In late April, the Biden Administration announced a new proposal to manage regional migration. We recognize that the Administration is taking steps to expand refugee resettlement and family reunion parole, measures that will provide a life-saving pathway for individuals and families in need of protection. Yet these expansions are part of a proposal that further restricts access to asylum for those arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Meanwhile, in Congress, we oppose bills in both the House and Senate which would severely cut access to asylum and limit the rights of asylum seekers. We call upon Congress to find long-term solutions to ensure that the U.S. has the processes in place to welcome and provide refuge for asylum seekers.
As organizations guided by Catholic values, we see it as our duty to welcome those in need of refuge. As recently stated by Pope Francis, “How sad and painful it is to see closed doors. The closed doors of our selfishness with regard to others; the closed doors of our individualism amid a society of growing isolation; the closed doors of our indifference towards the underprivileged and those who suffer; the doors we close towards those who are foreign or unlike us, towards migrants or the poor.”

We urge the U.S. government to promote the safety of asylum seekers and protect their rights. Through continued restrictions on asylum and the militarization of the border, the U.S. government has shut the door to many of our siblings who are calling out for help. This failure to provide welcome sends a clear message to the rest of the world that the U.S. will not keep its previous asylum promises and instead continues to turn away from those most in need.

Signed

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Jesuit Refugee Service – USA
Hope Border Institute
Kino Border Initiative
Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico
Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker – Washington DC
St. Columban Mission for Justice, Peace and Ecology
Pax Christi – USA
Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
Franciscan Network for Migrants – USA
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services Inc
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Catholics Against Racism in Immigration (CARI)