The Nexus Between Migration and Human Trafficking

United States Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, a collaborative, faith-based national network that works to eradicate modern-day slavery, deplores the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world, some of which results from forced migration and our failed national refugee and immigration policies.

New immigrants may be susceptible to trafficking because of their precarious social and economic circumstances. Undocumented immigrants are at even greater risk because they live in constant fear of apprehension, detention, and deportation. Increased immigration enforcement only serves to push immigrants further into the shadows and gives a chilling advantage to traffickers who use people’s immigration status as a tool to exploit their labor or coerce them into participating in the sex trade.

President Trump’s decision to drastically decrease refugee admissions places these children, women, and men, already among the most vulnerable and desperate people on earth, at even greater risk of forced labor and human trafficking.

Unfortunately, at a time when a record number of people are on the move—forced from their homes by violence of all kinds including poverty, armed conflict, abuse, and persecution, the United States is woefully unprepared to deal with the threat of human trafficking. To date, many positions in the State Department which aid in anti-trafficking efforts both in the United States and internationally are not filled. The administration’s plans to defund international agencies, including UNICEF, the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, and the World Food Program that support people on the move and federal programs housed in the U.S. Department of State and the Justice Department undercut anti-trafficking efforts and feed into the hands of those who seek to exploit migrants and refugees.

We call on faith leaders, members of the Trump Administration, and our legislators in Congress to insist that our nation “welcome the stranger” and care for those seeking refuge. We demand that our national policies, programs, and laws uphold the dignity of all human beings and seek to end the trafficking of children, women, and men who are all God’s children made in God’s image and likeness.