



U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

2019 World Refugee Day Campaign
June 20, 2019



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Dear Friends,

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking invites you to join us in honoring refugees. On June 20, World Refugee Day, we commemorate the strength, courage, and resilience of refugees. Today, an unprecedented **68.5 million** people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly **25.4 million refugees**, over half of whom are **under the age of 18**.¹ Every 15 minutes a family is forced to flee their homeland.

We know that there is a strong link between forced migration and human trafficking. Men, women, and children are made vulnerable to human trafficking by the mass displacement caused by violence, extreme poverty, humanitarian crises, natural disasters, and conflict. Impoverished, vulnerable families are targeted by traffickers who promise to provide education and opportunity only to exploit them through forced labor, sexual exploitation, enslavement, or organ theft.

We invite you to stand in solidarity #WithRefugees and #StopRefugeeTrafficking on World Refugee Day, Thursday, June 20, 2019. [Join us in calling](#) your Representative and Senators and urging them to support two pro-refugee bills, the GRACE Act and the NO BAN Act.

There are several other ways that you can support refugees on June 20 and throughout the final week of the *Share the Journey Campaign*, June 16-23. This multi-year campaign sponsored by Caritas Internationalis, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services has sought to help us better understand the vulnerability of refugees, and to support them in their search for a safe, dignified life.

Join the [Share the Journey Campaign](#) and:

- [Encounter refugee stories](#) to learn their names and faces. Their stories remind us of our common humanity. Meet the people otherwise lost beneath headlines at our Share the Journey website.
- [Pray for refugees](#) during Mass the weekend of June 23. Take advantage of Share the Journey's collection of prayers, videos, and Church teaching in support of the largest wave of immigrants since WWII.
- [Walk the walk](#) by joining or registering a pilgrimage walk for refugees. Share the Journey offers a list of existing walks and help to start your own and record your miles.
- [Host an Encounter Dinner](#) to better understand refugees' hopes and fears while enjoying a meal together in your home or parish. These personal encounters can enrich our lives in sometimes surprising, always gratifying ways.

Finally, please let us know how you are planning to commemorate World Refugee Day 2019. Leave us a note on the [USCSAHT Facebook page](#).

In solidarity,
-U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

¹UNHCR: [Figures at a Glance](#)

2019 World Refugee Day Backgrounder on the Links between Human Trafficking and the Refugee Crisis

There is a strong link between forced migration and human trafficking. Trafficking victims are typically first made vulnerable by mass displacement, violence and extreme poverty. Humanitarian crises, natural disasters, and conflict situations linked to gross violations of human rights often trigger forced displacements and large migratory movements. Impoverished, vulnerable families are targeted by traffickers who promise to provide education and training and exploit them: through forced labor, sexual exploitation, begging, crimes, trafficking in organs.

Children are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation in these contexts, as these displacements create family instability and destroy community structures.

Unaccompanied or isolated minors are at an increased risk of trafficking throughout their journey, but especially in overcrowded refugee camps. Some minors are forced by their own families to work under conditions of exploitation or subjected to forced marriage.

Traffickers lure their victims with offers of transportation, asylum, employment, and even marriage. They often charge incredibly high fees to coordinate travel arrangements or paperwork, and use that fee to coerce parents and children to work until that ever-increasing “debt” is paid off.

At the same time, migrants and refugees are often regarded with fear and disdain. Many believe that most migrants are young men seeking quick access to developed countries to take someone else’s job or to cause violence. But the numbers show, and the stories reveal, that this is a myth. Over 52% of migrants are women and children. The proportion of children among refugees and migrants is quickly and drastically increasing. Refugees are fleeing for their lives, not with an intent to cause harm or promote extremism.

One way to manage the problem is to provide more legal pathways for refugees, removing the need for illegal networks. However, many countries (including the United States) are leaning toward adopting tighter immigration policies and imposing fees for asylum claims. This could make pursuing legal migration channels more cumbersome and could push more people into the hands of traffickers who offer a quicker and cheaper way of entering a country.

Sources:

[UNICEF USA: “If You Care about Trafficking, You Should Care About Refugees”](#)

[Caritas: “The Links Between Human Trafficking and Forced Migration”](#)

[“A multibillion-dollar criminal network is being fueled by inadequate refugee policies, experts say.”](#)

[“Donald Trump wants to charge asylum seekers to process applications as migrants seek U.S. entry”](#)

refugee
noun ref' u' gee \,re-fyu -'jē, 're-fyu -,\
Someone who has been forced to leave from their own country because of war or for religious or political reasons.

USCSAHT Statement on Immigration and Trafficking

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.

November, 2017

Prayers for World Refugee Day

God our refuge,

You share the journey
with migrants and refugees,
lightening their footsteps with hope.
For you, Lord, are close
to the broken-hearted.

Pour out your Spirit
upon world leaders.
May they see the tragedies
of our human family,
and be moved to respond with
wisdom, compassion and courage.

Open our eyes and hearts
to the God-given dignity
of all your people.
Move us to welcome our neighbors,
and so bear witness to your love.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adonai, God of all seekers,

Many are the journeys your people have
taken:
Abraham's journey led from fear to
understanding;

Moses' journey led from bondage to
liberty;
the disciples' journey led from death to
new life.

Even today, your people journey—
immigrants and refugees, pilgrims and
nomads,
searching for hope, searching for
opportunity,
searching for you.

Lord, I know that I too am called to
journey.
Continue to call me beyond my comfort
and into encounter.
And when I meet a companion on the
road,
may we find you in each other's embrace.
Let us share the journey.
Amen.

Source: Share the Journey #sharejourney



Sample Prayer Intentions

- For all refugees who are forced to flee from their homes, that God might bring them to a place of peace and safety, we pray to our God.
- For refugee children, who have been separated from their families due to difficult circumstances or death, that God will provide his protection, we pray to our God.
- For Church leaders, that they will continue in their commitment to lead Catholic social service agencies and encourage us all to support lifesaving assistance for refugees around the world and to be active partners in refugee resettlement and provide in their communities a place of welcome, we pray to our God.
- For Christians and all people of good will, that they might find the compassion to walk in solidarity with refugees and the courage to advocate on their behalf, we pray to our God.
- For U.S. and world leaders and elected officials, that they might work together to end the strife and persecution that gives rise to refugee crises, provide care and protection for refugees forced to flee, and share responsibility in helping them build new lives, we pray to our God.
- For Church leaders, that they will continue in their commitment to lead Catholic social service agencies and encourage us all to support lifesaving assistance for refugees around the world and to be active partners in refugee resettlement and provide in their communities a place of welcome, we pray to our God.
- For Christians and all people of good will, that they might find the compassion to walk in solidarity with refugees and the courage to advocate on their behalf, we pray to our God.
- For U.S. and world leaders and elected officials, that they might work together to end the strife and persecution that gives rise to refugee crises, provide care and protection for refugees forced to flee, and share responsibility in helping them build new lives, we pray to our God.

Source: USCCB, Justice for Immigrants World Refugee Day Toolkit, 2018

Stories of Trafficked Immigrants and Asylum Seekers

Stories of Human Trafficking Survivors

The following two stories are from survivors assisted through the work of the National Human Trafficking Hotline operated by the Polaris Project in the United States.

Survivor Story: Promised an Education, Forced to Work Instead

Born and raised in a small village in Ghana, Natalia's family was struggling to pay the school fees for her education and welcomed the opportunity for Natalia to receive an education in the U.S.

Shortly after she arrived in the U.S., the father she was living with began to physically and sexually abuse the young girl, creating a constant environment of fear for Natalia. For the next six years she was forced to clean the house, wash clothes, cook, and care for their three children, often working 18 hours a day while receiving no form of payment. She was never allowed to enroll in school as the family had promised, to go outside, or even use the phone. One day, after she was severely beaten, Natalia saw an opportunity to run away from the home and a neighbor called the police. She was then taken to a local hospital for medical care. The nurse assisting Natalia was aware of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center and referred her to Polaris New Jersey.

Survivor Story: Tricked by a Man She Trusted

Several years ago, Gabriella lived in Colombia with her family and worked at a grocery store. As the eldest child, she had to provide for her mother and sisters after her father committed suicide. A childhood friend of Gabriella's moved to the United States some years before, and he offered to help her move to America every time he visited Colombia. He promised he would help her to find work in a restaurant so she could better support her family. After a year, she agreed.

The next thing she knew, Gabriella was taken to the U.S. and forced into prostitution. Not only was she held in debt bondage for \$10,000, but she was told that if she tried to escape, her family would be harmed. For five long years, Gabriella lived as the property of her traffickers. She was moved to a different brothel almost every week, never knew where she was, and wasn't able to seek outside help. Unfortunately, Gabriella's story is not unique.

Source: [The Polaris Project](#)



Stories of Asylum Seekers at the U.S. Southern Border

The following three stories are from Hope Border Institute/Instituto Fronterizo Esperanza.

Lucia's story

Lucia is an asylum seeker from San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. Due in large part to gang violence connected with the flow of drugs to the U.S., San Salvador is one of the most murderous cities in the world. In Lucia's neighborhood, girls

approaching puberty are often forced into the sex trade or other types of slavery by the local gang. After her 12-year-old daughter, Alia, was approached and threatened by gang members, Lucia fled with Alia to the El Paso border. Immigration officials separated mother and child, placing Alia in a processing facility nearly 1,000 miles away. Lucia was placed in immigrant detention in the El Paso area and told by officials that she would have to spend at least six months in detention away from her daughter if she pursued an asylum claim. Overcome with anxiety at being isolated from her daughter in detention, Lucia withdrew her claim.

Natalia's story

Natalia is a Salvadoran woman traveling alone who learned she was three weeks pregnant after receiving a medical examination while in ICE custody. Still, ICE officers decided not to release Natalia. The stress of enduring pregnancy in detention was significant for Natalia, who had spent her last pregnancy bedridden. Natalia experienced serious bleeding and despite receiving medical attention within the detention center, the problem was not resolved. Natalia lost her baby while in detention during her fifth month of pregnancy and was deported shortly thereafter.

Jesus' story

Jesus is a Venezuelan asylum seeker. He is HIV positive and has requested parole on several occasions due to concerns related to inadequate medical treatment while in detention. Jesus has been detained over seven months, at times in solitary confinement. Jesus was denied appropriate treatment, including antiviral therapy, for nearly two months. Medical experts have determined that his physical and mental health are significantly deteriorating.

Sealing the Border documents violations of the rights and dignity of migrants and asylum-seekers by immigration enforcement agencies and officials in the El Paso and Southern New Mexico region of the borderlands.

Full report is available at: [Hope Border Institute](#)

Take Action on World Refugee Day

Contact your Representative and Senators

Background

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a model humanitarian program and a critical tool of U.S. foreign policy. Refugees are people who have fled persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group. Resettlement is the last resort for refugees who

cannot safely return home or remain in the country where they first fled. Refugees resettled in the United States rebuild their lives and contribute meaningfully to local economies. Every day, faith communities, employers, and volunteers welcome refugees. We urge Congress to stand with refugees by ensuring that The Refugee Act of 1980 is carried out in good faith.

Right now, resettlement is at an all-time low. The administration set the FY 2019 Presidential Determination (PD) on refugee admissions at 30,000 and is not on pace to meet even that historically low goal. We ask Congress to hold the Administration accountable to meet this goal, and to set a FY 2020 PD of at least 75,000 refugees. The average PD between 1980 and 2017 has been 95,000.

Two pro-refugee bills were recently introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate.

The GRACE Act: *The Guaranteed Refugee Admissions Ceiling Enhancement Act*, [H.R. 2146](#) & [S.1088](#), would set a minimum Presidential Determination (PD) on refugee admissions of 95,000 each fiscal year. The bill would also mandate quarterly reports on refugee admissions, increasing transparency, accountability, and oversight.

The NO BAN Act: *The National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act*, [H.R. 2214](#) & [S.1123](#), would repeal the executive orders that have halted refugee admissions, banned individuals from a number of Muslim-majority countries, and barred individuals from seeking asylum between ports of entry. In addition, it would strengthen the Immigration and Nationality Act to prohibit religious discrimination and limit overly broad executive authority to issue such bans.



Take Action!

Please call your members of Congress (202) 224-3121. Tell them that you welcome refugees and urge them to protect refugees and support refugee resettlement.

Sample Script

Hello! May I speak with the staffer who handles refugee legislation? My name is _____. I'm a constituent and a Catholic sister/person of faith and I am deeply concerned about the Trump administration's policies which fail to protect refugees. The need for refugee resettlement has never been greater and the U.S. response has been to abdicate our legal and moral responsibility. I urge Congress to honor the welcoming tradition of our country and to stand with refugees by ensuring that The Refugee Act of 1980 is carried out in good faith.

There are two pieces of legislation currently before the House/Senate that I am asking the Representative/Senator to co-sponsor.

The GRACE Act, H.R. 2146/S.1088 would set a minimum Presidential Determination (PD) on refugee admissions of 95,000 each fiscal year.

The NO BAN Act: H.R. 2214/S.1123 would repeal the executive orders that have halted refugee admissions, banned individuals from several Muslim-majority countries, and barred individuals from seeking asylum between ports of entry.

Can you tell me if the Representative/Senator is a co-sponsor of either or both bills? Can I count on the Representative/Senator's support for refugees and for these two bills?

Thank you for your time.

Sample Social Media Posts

Facebook



A strong link exists between forced migration and human trafficking. Men, women and children are made vulnerable to human trafficking by the mass displacement caused by violence, extreme poverty, humanitarian crises, natural disasters and war.
#StopRefugeeTrafficking

Today, remember the 22 million people fleeing their homes and countries in search of safety for their families, only to have fallen victim to human trafficking.
#StopRefugeeTrafficking

#StopRefugeeTrafficking! Join USCSAHT in asking your Representative & Senators to support H.R. 2146/S.1088, the GRACE ACT – Guaranteed Refugee Admissions Ceiling Enhancement Act on World Refugee Day (202-224-3121).

Stand in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers on World Refugee Day. Call your Representative & Senators and ask them to support the GRACE Act (H.R. 2146 / S.1088) which would set a minimum Presidential Determination on refugee admissions to the US of 95,000 each fiscal year. (202-224-3121) #StopRefugeeTrafficking

Take action on World Refugee Day. Call your Representative & Senators Act (202-224-3121) and ask them to support H.R. 2214/S.1123, the *National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act*– NO BAN. It would repeal the executive orders that have halted refugee admissions, banned individuals from a number of Muslim-majority countries, and barred individuals from seeking asylum between ports of entry. #StopRefugeeTrafficking

Twitter



Jesus calls us to welcome the stranger and protect the most vulnerable among us. #StopRefugeeTrafficking

Refugees are vulnerable to human traffickers, especially women and girls. #StopRefugeeTrafficking

June 20 is World Refugee Day. Support and protect refugees from the dangers of human trafficking. #StopRefugeeTrafficking

#StopRefugeeTrafficking We remember those who are fleeing their countries in search of safety for their families, only to face the dangers of human trafficking.

#Refugees are people who seek the same things everyone needs: freedom, a home, and safety for their children. #StopRefugeeTrafficking

On #WorldRefugeeDay we remember those who have been trafficked for sex or forced labor as they sought safety from violence. #StopRefugeeTrafficking

Welcome the stranger! Call & ask your Representative and Senators to support H.R. 2146/S.1088 – the GRACE Act – Guaranteed Refugee Admissions Ceiling Enhancement Act. (202-224-3121) #StopRefugeeTrafficking

Take action to prohibit religious discrimination on World Refugee Day. Call & ask your Representative and Senators (202-224-3121) to support the NO BAN Act – H.R. 2214/S.1123. #StopRefugeeTrafficking

Be sure to let us know what you did to celebrate World Refugee Day 2019!

Leave us a note on our [USCSAHT Facebook page](#).

