

*May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people.*

*Psalm 72:2-4a*

Addressing forced displacement effectively and responsibly means providing protection for those who flee violence while focusing on the conditions forcing people to flee. As children of God, all people deserve safety, a unified family, and food on our tables no matter our geographical location. We know that migration is a symptom of deeper social and economic issues, including violence, insecurity, and unequal social and economic conditions. Because of this, no immigration strategy is truly comprehensive and long-term if it does not address the economic, social, and political factors which compel migration.

U.S. policies and practices play a critical role around the world either contributing to or helping address the root causes of those conditions. For Central America and Mexico, U.S. trade policies in tandem with the promotion of large-scale infrastructure projects and extractive industries have exacerbated forced migration and violence. The U.S. must radically reshape our policies and priorities to best protect and promote safety for all people.

### Core values

- Reduce the need for people to leave their homes
- Robustly fund programs that help address the root causes of migration
- Invest in community-based, sustainable development to address economic factors leading to migration
- Support human rights and protection mechanisms in the Northern Triangle
- Reshape U.S. trade and foreign policies
- Reshape international financial institutions' policies and practices



### The face of immigration

Antonio Garcia, 25, returned to Chihuahua, Mexico, after working at a Texas construction site for only four months. Garcia had the foresight to know he wanted to work in the United States temporarily, save money, and return to Mexico to invest in a small business. "I never wanted to work for someone else," Garcia said.

After returning to Chihuahua, Garcia invested his savings in the machinery for a concrete block factory. A local farmers' cooperative helped him acquire tools for the business. "I bought the machinery and, little by little, it started growing," Garcia said. His success has enabled him to hire three laborers to staff his growing business. With a solid source of long-term income, Garcia is an example of a

rural Mexican youth who has no need to re-migrate to the United States. "If everything goes well, I don't plan on returning," Garcia says. "Maybe only as a tourist."

With the support of local and international stakeholders, the Mexican countryside has the potential to be provide safe, sufficient and sustainable livelihoods rather than being a source for emigration.

*And He found thee in need, and made thee independent.*

*Quran 93:8*

## *How do our faith principles inform our policy recommendations?*

**Support sustainable community development and assistance.** Poverty and lack of opportunity, alongside violence, are driving forces for youth in the Central American region. U.S. development assistance should support alternatives for youth who are especially vulnerable due to lack of opportunities and multiple forms of violence. Investment in culturally-appropriate, grassroots development that defends basic human rights for all people provides sustainable alternatives to migration for individuals seeking better futures for their families, and reduces the need for costly border enforcement, detention, and deportation systems. In particular, investment in women and girls has a profound multiplier effect that benefits local communities. Instead of investing in large infrastructure projects or extractive industries, we support robust funding for comprehensive community-based development programs that are culturally relevant, and pay particular attention to women's empowerment and child welfare programs. In addition, Economic Support Funds targeted at youth resilience and crime reduction should be scaled up to further build community stability and reduce the necessity for people to migrate.

**Ensure adherence to human rights.** Congressional funding must end reliance on militarized and armed approaches to the prevention of violence and migration. Instead, funds should be allocated for protection of human rights defenders, strengthening judicial independence, the capacity of prosecutors to independently investigate police and military abuses, and the ability of civil society to hold government actors accountable for corruption and abuse. In regions with widespread corruption, it is impossible to guarantee that U.S. security assistance will be used to support transparency and human rights. To support democratic institutions, it is imperative that the United States avoids funding the training of police and armed forces implicated in human rights abuses and endemic corruption.

**Expand refugee protection in the region.** The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) expansion of in-region protection of internally displaced vulnerable populations has played an important role in strengthening asylum systems in the Northern Triangle of Central America and in Mexico, building up mechanisms to identify and protect the most vulnerable populations, and pursue solutions for internally displaced refugees. We recommend that Congress expand funding for UNHCR endeavors, for NGOs attending to returned migrants, and for shelters along the migration route.

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**OVER 1 MILLION PEOPLE**

Displaced by violence in Mexico and the Northern Triangle in 2015, almost double the number displaced in 2014

**60% OF PEOPLE**

Living in rural areas of the Northern Triangle live in poverty

**1.5 MILLION SMALL FARMERS**

Driven out of work between 1993 and 2005 after U.S. promotion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)