

March 6, 2020

Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Re: Asylum Seekers in Remain in Mexico / “Migrant Protection Protocols” Policy

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

Our 153 legal representation, refugee assistance, faith-based, human rights, and community groups write to urge your agency to end the “Migrant Protection Protocols” (“MPP”), to allow asylum seekers to pursue refugee protection—from safety in the United States as required by U.S. law and treaties—and to inform you that we stand ready to provide legal representation and humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers in the United States.

On Friday, February 28, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California’s April 2019 injunction blocking the MPP policy, a ruling which was subsequently stayed as the government pursues appeal. We urge that your agency—and the Trump administration—immediately abandon efforts to prolong this legally flawed and dangerous policy. As we know full well from our work with people seeking refuge at our southern border, asylum seekers in MPP have been subjected to kidnappings, torture, assaults, and other brutal violence while in Mexico waiting for their U.S. immigration court hearings. In addition, MPP constitutes an insurmountable safety and logistical barrier to legal representation for many asylum seekers stranded in Mexico, as some of our groups detailed in a January 28 letter to you, which we again attach for your reference. About 95 percent of those in MPP are unable to secure legal representation.

We urge the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to uphold U.S. asylum law and allow asylum seekers currently subject to MPP into the United States so they can seek asylum from safety in this country, as required under U.S. law and treaties. The U.S. government is more than capable of managing refugee arrivals in humane ways without resorting to illegal border closures, threatening exercises of militarized force, and harsh, punitive policies.

As you surely know, represented asylum seekers overwhelmingly appear for their hearings, as do those with community support. Together, we will make every effort to ensure these asylum seekers can access pro bono legal representation and humanitarian assistance. Many of our organizations have extensive expertise working with refugee populations around the world; others are deeply rooted in U.S. border communities and have long histories operating faith-based or community shelters. Many of us will provide legal information about appearance

obligations and referrals to legal representation, trauma counseling, medical care and other humanitarian necessities. Many of those in MPP have family in the United States—including in California, Florida, New York, and Texas—with whom they can stay.

These men, women, and children—seeking asylum from Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela and elsewhere—have already suffered too much. Many have been stranded in dangerous and difficult conditions under MPP for a year or more already. They should not be subjected to additional harsh or punitive policies—including policies that block them from legal representation in their asylum proceedings—and should absolutely *not* be jailed in detention facilities and prisons.

We are happy to meet with your agencies and others to plan for a prompt, humane, and orderly end to the MPP program.

Sincerely,

Abuelas RGV

ACLU

African American Ministers In Action

Al Otro Lado

Ameinu

American Friends Service Committee

American Immigration Council

American Immigration Lawyers Association

Angry Tias

Anti-Defamation League

Arizona Jews for Justice

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asylum Seeker Assistance Project

Augustinian

Avodah

Bay Area Health and Legal Partnerships for Immigrant Youth

Benedictines for Peace

CAIR Coalition

Capuchin Franciscans, Prov. of St. Joseph

Catholic Coalition for Migrants and Refugees

Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona - Casa Alitas Program

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Victims of Torture

Center Global

Centro Legal de la Raza
Church Women United in New York State
Church World Service
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Colorado JCRC
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic
Community Change
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Congregation Beth Israel
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of the Mission, Western Province USA
Detention Watch Network
Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc.
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
Families Belong Together
Flint Jewish Federation
Franciscan Action Network
Freedom for Immigrants
Freedom Network USA
Glenmary Home Missioners
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program
HIAS, Inc.
Hispanic Federation
Hope Border Institute
Human Rights First
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Human Rights Watch
Immigration Center for Women and Children
Immigration Equality
Immigration Hub
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Immigrant Legal Defense
Immigrants' Rights/International Human Rights Clinic, Center for Social Justice, Seton Hall Law
Innovation Law Lab
Institute for Women in Migration (IMUMI)

Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Service
International Refugee Assistance Project
International Rescue Committee
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Phoenix
Jewish Community Relations Council of Portland
Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey
Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Family and Community Services
Jewish Family and Community Services East Bay
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis
Jewish Family Services
Jewish Family Service of Colorado
Jewish Family Services of Columbus
Jewish Family Service of Greater New Orleans
Jewish Family Service LA
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
Jewish Justice Advocates of Temple Beth El of South Orange County California
Jewish Social Services of Madison
Jewish Vocational Service in Boston
Justice in Motion
Justice Revival
Keshet
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND, Inc.)
Kino Border Initiative
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice
Loyola Law School Immigrant Justice Clinic
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mishkan Chicago
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center

National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
NM CAFé
Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugees
Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church
Passionist Solidarity Network
Pax Christi USA
Physicians for Human Rights
Poder Latinx
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province
Program for Torture Victims
Public Counsel
Rabbinical Assembly
Reconstructing Judaism
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Refugees International
Rian Immigrant Center
Safe Horizon
Saint Francis Friary
Sanctuary for Families
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Sisters of Charity of New York
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Sojourners
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Southern Poverty Law Center
Spiritans
Tahirih Justice Center
Taylor Levy Law
The Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
The Jewish Community Relations Council of Atlanta
The Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province
Truah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Uri L'Tzedek

Union for Reform Judaism

United We Dream

University of Southern California Gould School of Law Immigration Clinic

Washington Office on Latin America

Witness at the Border

Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

Women's Refugee Commission

Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights